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*J. Beecher D.D.*  
*with*  
*affectionate regard*

SIGNS OF THE TIMES;

A

SERIES OF DISCOURSES

DELIVERED IN THE

SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA.

BY

CORNELIUS C. CUYLER, D. D.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

PHILADELPHIA :

WILLIAM S. MARTIEN.

1839.

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THE  
FOLLOWING DISCOURSES,  
PREPARED FOR THEIR INSTRUCTION,  
ARE  
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED  
TO  
THE CONGREGATION  
OF THE  
SECOND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,  
PHILADELPHIA,  
BY  
THEIR AFFECTIONATE FRIEND AND PASTOR,  
THE AUTHOR.



## P R E F A C E .

THE most of the following discourses were originally neither designed nor prepared with a view to their publication. The afternoon of the first Sabbath in every month is devoted by the author to the Catechetical instruction of the children and youth of his charge. This has given occasion to a public service on the evening of the same day. These services were generally attended by large and mixed audiences. It became a matter of considerable importance to supply such audiences with instruction which should, at the same time, command their attention, and prove profitable to them. A large proportion of them consisted of young men, who had either just entered upon the active concerns of life, or who were preparing for them. Several courses of

instruction were taken into consideration, and it was finally concluded that the aspects of Divine Providence were such as to afford many lessons which might be taught and enforced with profit.

This conviction was confirmed by the consideration, that although the dispensations of Divine Providence are often deeply interesting and highly instructive, they are seldom taken up and considered in order—and thus the advantages which might be derived from them are lost, because they have not been expounded and enforced. Even those which concern us as individuals, are soon forgotten, unless attention is from time to time directed to them, or the general principles of the Divine administration are so infixed in the mind as to identify the presence and government of God with every movement.

It was also thought that as *the latter days* approach, the aspects of the Divine administration might be expected to become more interesting and important, especially towards a country whose whole history has been so

strikingly marked in every stage of it, and whose institutions and character are calculated to exercise, nay, have already exercised, so important an influence on the world. There was probably no mistake in attributing a special character to "the signs of the times," with respect to this land. And if this be so, they are certainly illustrative of our character and duty as a nation. Such a child of Providence should have its eyes directed to the Father's hand. We are bound to observe, study, and improve "the signs of the times." They are neither too dark to be observed, too abstruse to be studied, nor too unimportant to be improved. A way-faring man, though a fool, need not err. This impression has induced the choice of the general subject, and the particular topics which have been discussed, illustrated, and enforced, under it.

These discourses were prepared and delivered with a view to usefulness. They are published at the desire of many who heard them, and by the advice of a few friends, in whose judgment the author had great confidence.

They are now submitted to the public with great diffidence, and under a deep conviction that their usefulness is entirely dependent upon the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. That He may be present with every reader, is the sincere and fervent prayer of

THE AUTHOR.

PHILADELPHIA, JUNE, 1839.

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## INTRODUCTION.

HAVING perused, in manuscript, a number of the "discourses" which compose the present volume, and advised the author to publish them, let me hope for the reader's indulgence, while I very briefly assign the reasons for the counsel which I gave.

In the first place, the subject of these discourses is vastly momentous. The title of the publication itself, refers to an interrogatory of our Saviour, carrying with it a most severe censure of those who were criminally blind to the duty which his question indicated. In the preaching of the Gospel, the noticeable peculiarities and import of Divine Providence ought ever to claim the special attention of the faithful pastor. We learn from the revelation which God has given us, that it is his purpose and plan, to teach by his Providence as well as by his Word. The two, indeed, are often the best and most striking proof and illustration of each other. Discourses, moreover, which refer to events actually passing, or that have recently passed, under our own observation, are, if

well conducted, uncommonly interesting, and impart instruction and admonition, which come home, with peculiar force, to “men’s business and bosoms.”

Again: It appeared to me, on the perusal of the discourses which my friend submitted to my inspection, that he had listened to the voice of God’s providence, and understood its true import, in many occurrences in which nothing of the kind strikes the ear of the multitude, and to which many, even of the pious, are too inattentive, or, from which they receive only some fugitive impressions. If we accredit the Gospel, we must believe, that a sparrow falleth not to the ground, nor a hair from our head, without the notice and ordering of our Heavenly Father; and these truths are, we know, accompanied by the declaration, “Ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Thus are we emphatically taught, that the hand of God has an immediate direction or control of all the events which affect, not only individuals, but communities of men. It follows, that nations rise or fall, experience prosperity or adversity, witness propitious or adverse seasons, escape or suffer from, wasting disease, from earthquakes, tornadoes, inundations, tempests, conflagrations, noxious insects or reptiles; are favoured or frowned on, in their agricultural, manufactur-

ing, and commercial interests, and in the consequent abundance or scarcity of the means of subsistence; are blest with peace or embroiled in war; see virtue and piety prevail, with their countless attendant blessings, or are afflicted with the prevalence of vice, of infidelity, blasphemy, neglect, and contempt of divine institutions, of avarice, intemperance, domestic broils, homicides, murders, assassinations, and duels—*all* according to the permission, or ordaining will, of Him, “who doth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, what doest thou?” How immensely important is it? how exactly coincident with the design of God, in the various dispensations just hinted at, that their character and language should be heedfully regarded by the subjects of his moral government? And who, it may be asked, are specially bound to put a tongue into these dispensations? The ministers of religion, beyond a question, must be the answer. Their imperative duty it manifestly is, to call the attention of the people of their charge, and, so far as they can, of the public generally, to the improvement which the God of Providence requires all to make, of the events which he causes to pass before them. Believing that this had been done by the au-

thor of the sermons which fill this volume, I advised to their publication; not only that his own people might have the advantage of re-veiwng, at their leisure, what they had heard from the lips of their pastor, but, that others might be sharers in the benefit.

Finally: It is believed, that the author of these discourses has not only been fortunate in the selection of his subjects, but happy in the manner in which he has discussed them. The portion of narrative which he has naturally, and, indeed, necessarily introduced, is at once adapted to awaken and fix attention, and to form the basis of the doctrines, inferences, and illustrations which follow; and, although a well instructed Christian, in *reading* as well as in *hearing* pulpit addresses, will commonly look for edification, more from the revival and renewed impression of known truth, than from learning something which, to him, is entirely *novel*; yet there may be, not only a real novelty in the *manner* in which familiar truth is presented, but there are some truths and subjects of a religious character, and of a practical and profitable kind, which lie so much out of the tract of common thought and discussion, that, when skilfully handled, will suggest ideas *strictly new*, to many who can by no means be justly considered as novices in Chris-

tian attainment. To this class of compositions, to a considerable extent, it appeared to me, the discourses, now in the hands of the reader, fairly belonged; and, as this was a chief reason for advising to their publication, so it is a strong motive for wishing and hoping, that they may have an extensive publication, and a careful perusal.

It must not be omitted, that if my friend had not earnestly requested me to give my opinion of this work, candidly and publicly, I should not have hazarded the charge of vanity, to which I perceive I may expose myself, by making the foregoing statement.

ASHBEL GREEN.

PHILADELPHIA, *May 10th*, 1839.



# LECTURE I.

## MISSIONS.

### MATTHEW XVI. I.

CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES ?

THE period of our Saviour's advent and ministry was eventful and portentous. The Roman empire, by the aggressive movement of ages, had spread itself out over most parts of the then known world. The policy and power of that wonderful people, had triumphed over almost all the nations of Europe, and subjected them to their control. Northern Africa acknowledged their authority; and Western Asia, reduced to the form of provinces, lay submissive at their feet. Thus situated, the world was in a state of profound peace. But while the Roman empire was thus extended, and apparently at the zenith of power, the process of decay had commenced at the heart. Pride, vain-glory, and luxury, the consequences of success in warlike enterprises, and increased wealth, had corrupted the morals, and enervated the energies of that people, and were rapidly preparing the way

for those revolutions and changes which afterwards took place in the state of that empire, and the world.

At the time of the Saviour's advent, the Jews were subject to the Roman yoke. Before this time public attention had been generally excited by the ancient prophecies, and high expectations were entertained, not only with respect to the fact of Messiah's appearance, but the effects which were to result from it both to the Jews, and the world at large. *The coming events had cast their shadows before them.* The Jews, however, had fallen as far from their once high and palmy state, in morals and religion, as in national strength and political importance; and hence were not prepared to receive such a Saviour as God had promised, and Christ proved to be. This accounts for much of their conduct while he ministered among them, and particularly their treatment of him. They were looking for a splendid person, a conquering hero, a temporal prince, an extended empire to which all other nations were to be subjected; and, of course, great personal and political consideration and influence, in which they expected largely to share—while, in fact, he came, meek, lowly, humble, a man of sorrows, to die for sinners; to leave the world to set up a spiritual kingdom, to revolutionize the world by the sanctified use



of the word and grace of God. And the Jews, instead of being the partakers of his temporal glory, were to be the unwilling witnesses of his Messiahship and truth, by their unbelief, the subversion of their civil and religious polity, their dispersion among all nations, and a degradation and suffering which were to endure for many centuries; and from which they would find no relief, till they should seek it penitently through the blood, the guilt of shedding which they wickedly imprecated on themselves and their children.

The signs which were foreshadowing these events, were already appearing in the state of the Roman empire, the condition and feelings of the Jewish people, and the general aspects of Divine Providence, which began to put on a lowering character; and they were portrayed as with a sun-beam, in the holy oracles which God had committed to them, to guide their faith and conduct. To these considerations, however, the Jews of that day were blind. They had no discernment of the things which belonged to their peace, and hence did not foresee the danger which threatened them, nor hide themselves, till the storm fell upon their devoted heads.

And yet they were keen enough of discernment in relation to other things:—"Ye can discern the face of the sky," says the Saviour, "but

ye cannot discern the signs of the times:"—a matter of infinitely more importance to them on every account. By this he designed to rebuke them for their inattention to a subject in which they had so deep an interest. Every age, my hearers, has its signs. As long as there are men on earth, and God governs them by his providence, these signs will exist. They are let down from heaven, by the hand of God to be seen of men, and studied by the light of his holy word, and improved to his glory, and our good. "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." Of these signs the present day is by no means destitute; and if they are not peculiar, (as it is confidently believed some of them are,) yet they are exhibited to be seen, studied, and improved by men, for their benefit. Under this impression, and with this view, the subject of our present meditation has been selected. Permit me to ask your close and prayerful attention to it. Let us advert

I. To what *is*, and should be *esteemed* to be, the glory of the present age, *the great and successful efforts made to spread abroad among mankind the Gospel of Christ and its blessed influences*. Before the Redeemer ascended to glory, he gave to his disciples this commandment—"Preach the Gospel to every creature,"

and encouraged them to hope for its accomplishment by these three considerations; the promise of his presence; the declaration of his Almighty power; and the gift of his Spirit. Thus commanded and encouraged, they went forth to their work, undismayed, although all earth and hell were opposed to them. During their life time the Gospel had already been preached in every province of the wide spread Roman empire, and multitudes had every where submitted themselves to the Saviour's authority. And the work went steadily on, notwithstanding the opposition which was made to it, including many bitter and bloody persecutions, until, in the beginning of the fourth century, the religion of the cross ascended the throne of the Cesars, in the person of Constantine the Great. It is a question, whether pure and undefiled religion ever had a much wider extension than at that period, till after the Reformation in the sixteenth century; for what it gained in one quarter, it lost in another; and it gradually became almost universally corrupted. Nor did the aggressive influence of the Reformation on the territories of darkness and sin, last long. Its fervours were soon exhausted, and its influence became retrograde in Europe; and when it was carried abroad, by the discovery and settlement of this continent, and the discovery of a passage

to the East Indies by sea, it was too much encumbered by a spirit of worldly enterprise and gain, to exert a proper and permanent efficiency. At the commencement of the last century, Protestantism itself had lost much of its vitality, and degenerated into formality. Under such circumstances, missionary efforts were scarcely thought of. The Moravians, about that time, had just commenced their efforts. Three or four Germans, employed by a British society, were engaged in the East Indies; and the Elliots, Mathews, and, at a somewhat later period, Brainerd, had devoted themselves to the Indians of our own continent; but the cause became almost extinct at the premature death of the latter.

I date the first symptom of reviving life, and change for the better, from a small association of praying young men, at the University of Oxford, in England, in the year 1729, of whom were the Wesleys and Whitefield. These were among the most early, honoured, and efficient instruments of a revival of religion in the British Isles and this country, which, I have no doubt, was graciously sent of the Lord, to counteract the influence of that infidelity which swept like a torrent over Europe during the last century, and prepare the church of God to do her duty to the world. A series of well adapted

*means*, such as the world never saw, and the church never wielded, and promissory of the happiest results, have been put in requisition.

This age is distinguished by the establishment and successful operation of Bible, Missionary, Tract, Education, and Temperance Societies, and Infant and Sunday schools, all of them having for their object the glory of God, and the welfare of man; and each of them separately, and all of them collectively, bearing benignly upon these all important objects.

The Bible, either in whole, or in part, has already been translated and printed in more than one hundred and fifty languages of our world; and many millions of copies have been distributed. In all these languages there is preparation made for a full supply as soon as the people shall be prepared to read them, and the church to furnish the necessary means. Has the like of this ever been witnessed in any preceding age of the world. No, my hearers, it is one of the peculiarities of this age, one of *the signs* of the present time. The way is at least *opening* to give the word of God to all the dwellers on earth, so that they may read the wonderful works of God in their own living languages.

This singular and cheering state of things is connected with, and has sprung from the ef-

forts which have been made to spread the Gospel by means of Missions. Wherever men have gone to preach the Gospel, they have, as soon as practicable, commenced the translation of the sacred Scriptures, and the means to print them have to some extent been supplied by Bible Societies. Since the days of the Apostles, the work of missions has never engaged so much of the attention, excited so highly the interest, and called forth so generally and successfully the exertions of the Christian church as during the last half century. There is scarcely a denomination that has not felt the impulse. The Moravians, those pioneers in the sacred cause, have gone on in "the even tenor of their way," increasing their operations with their strength. The London Missionary Society, composed of members of most of the evangelical denominations in Great Britain, was instituted near the close of the last century, and has been engaged in the work with ardour and success. They were very soon followed (probably preceded) by the Baptists of England, of whom it is praise enough to say, that they sent out as their first missionaries, Carey, Ward, and Marshman, the fathers of Serampore, and the indefatigable translators of the Scriptures into the languages of India. After these came the Church Missionary Society, the

Methodist Missionary Society, the Scottish Missionary Society, the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, together with Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, Western\* Foreign, and Reformed Dutch Boards or Societies, in our own country; and a number of similar institutions on the continent of Europe.

These various institutions have succeeded in planting Christian Missions at various points of the British East Indian possessions, China, Burmah, New Holland, and New Zealand, Siam, the Dutch possessions, the Society and Sandwich Islands, the Cape of Good Hope, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Abyssinia, The Holy Land, Constantinople, Broosa, Erzeroom, Persia, Armenia, Smyrna, various points in Greece, and among very many of the native tribes of our own country. To which may be added the various operations of Domestic Societies to extend and strengthen the cause of Christ in Christian lands. To these operations God has added his blessing, so that many minds have been enlightened with the knowledge of the truth, and many hearts sanctified and devoted to God. And not only so, but this cause is every year acquiring new interest in the hearts of God's people, and some hundreds of new

\* Now adopted by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church.

labourers are going into the vineyard. The cause has commanded the services of some of the choicest spirits, both as to head and heart, which have ever devoted themselves to Christ. To prove this, I need only mention the names of Buchanan, Carey, Martyn, Morrison, Milne, Thomason, and our own Hall, Mills, Burgess, and Fisk, with a host of other worthies, some of whom have gone to rest, and many of whom are now "bearing the heat and burden of the day." In addition to this, many hundreds of young men, both in this country and Europe, have sacredly devoted themselves to the blessed work, and are in various stages of progress, preparing to enter upon their labours, and every year is adding to their number by scores, and by hundreds. And, in the meantime, the Church in every part of the world is waking up, and taking new interest in the subject of Missions, by increasing contributions, efforts, and prayers. As soon as labourers are found, they are sent into the vineyard. And while the church and its members at home are taking new interest in the subject, the new converts from heathenism are anxious to share as well in the labours as in the honours of the sacred cause. "The sacramental host" is marshalling its forces all around the territories of sin and darkness, preparing to make a grand aggres-



sive movement, in the confident hope of a glorious victory. And if they can only keep sight of the captain of their salvation, follow closely in his footsteps, use no armour but his, receive the word of command from his lips, and rely upon his power and skill, there is no knowing what wonders they will perform, nor how soon a conquered world will acknowledge his gracious authority.

Tracts have been brought to aid the cause of Bibles and Missions with happy success. They have been of incalculable service in Christian as well as in heathen lands. In Christian lands there are multitudes who will not touch a Bible, and who studiously avoid the preaching of the Gospel, to whom these little, humble, unobtrusive preachers of righteousness, find their way, bearing along with them enough of divine truth to save the soul, and doing their work before men are aware of their heavenly errand. And in heathen lands they can be put into requisition long before the Bible can be translated, printed, and circulated, or the Missionary be prepared to preach the gospel to edification.

The use of this little weapon was learned from the infidels of the last century. Voltaire and his coadjutors knew that they could not reach the mass of the people with their

elaborate treatises, and therefore scattered the tares by handfuls all over the land, by this means; and the unblest harvest has been reaped in the general demoralization of the people, the French revolution with its horrors and woes, and the wars and miseries which grew out of it. A useful lesson was thus learned by the followers of Christ, upon which they have since improved with great skill and success, both in Christian and heathen lands. Multitudes of them have been written, printed, and circulated, and many souls have been indebted to them for their whole stock of Christian knowledge, and not a few for the salvation of their souls. Their preparation has put into requisition some of the best heads and hearts in the church of Christ; and the consequence has been, that they have produced tracts which have received the approbation of the learned and the wise, and the reading of them has been blessed to the edification of Christians, the conviction of gainsayers, and the saving illumination of the ignorant.

They are happily calculated to be influentially auxiliary to the spread and success of the Gospel of Christ. They are more easily prepared and readily circulated than the sacred Scriptures. They can be sent where the preacher cannot go, and where we can find,

and prepare, and send forth one preacher of righteousness, millions of these little mutes may be sent, not only to prepare the way of the Lord, but to do the work of Evangelists. All are not qualified to preach the Gospel. All are not qualified to translate the Bible. But all the Lord's people may be tract distributors, and thus fulfil Moses' wish, "Would to God that all the Lord's people were prophets!" No department of Christian benevolence appears more happily calculated to further the progress of the kingdom of Christ. *The widow's mite* is made happily and visibly instrumental to save souls. The tract cause belongs to this age. *It is one of the signs of our times.* May it abundantly flourish, and increase with the increase of God.

Another institution which belongs to this age, and stands forth as a sign of the present time, is the cause of education as connected with the ministry of reconciliation. I am not well informed as to the facts, when education societies originated, or whether they took their rise on this, or the other side of the Atlantic. Nor is it material to determine these points. It is enough for my present purpose to remark, that they are of recent origin, and belong substantially to the present age. I am not unaware that most of the literary institutions on

earth have sprung from religion, and have been designed to furnish the Church of God with a competent ministry. And I am also aware that many young men have, long ago, been gratuitously educated for this purpose. But the movement of the Church toward evangelizing the world, and the deficiency of instruments, which investigations on the subject have brought to light, have proved the necessity of new efforts to furnish men well qualified to accomplish the great object. It was soon found that there were not enough among the sons of those who had the ability to educate their own children, to supply the wants of the Church and the world. Either such were not converted to God, and hence not morally qualified for such a work; or, they could not be brought to engage in it. And hence the necessity of seeking those who had a mind for the work, but had not the means to educate themselves. There may be divine sovereignty in this. "The poor have the Gospel preached unto them." "Not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." But there certainly is divine wisdom in it. "The heat and burden of the day," require not a race of men who have been delicately brought up, or who have fared sumptuously—but who know what it is to want and labour. If the rich will not

give their sons to Christ for this work, they ought not to think it hard to be called upon to assist in training substitutes for supplying their lack of service in this holy warfare. The work *must* be done.

But whatever the cause, the systematic training of men for this service, by the associated efforts of many, is peculiar to this age. And no where has the subject excited as much interest, or occasioned as much exertion, as in our country. Almost every denomination of Christians has felt the necessity of engaging in the work. While they have "prayed the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into the harvest," they have endeavoured to show their faith by their works. No small part of this field has been cultivated by Presbyterian and Congregational hands. For a length of time the American Education Society, principally composed of Congregationalists, with a flourishing auxiliary in the Presbyterian Church, took the lead in this important work, until the Presbyterian Church, for the safety and purity of her own institutions, found it necessary to prosecute the work more extensively and vigorously in her distinctive character. She found from experience, that whosoever should educate her ministry, and direct her missionary operations, must, as a matter of course, control

her institutions. Being of age, she felt as if she could, and might, under God, assume the direction of her own affairs, by the appointment of a Board of Education, although *some* of her own children think she has not *yet* come to the years of discretion, and had better remain under “tutors and governors.”

These two denominations have generally, for a few years past, kept by *this* means about fifteen hundred young men in a course of training for the Gospel ministry. How many have been patronized by other denominations, I know not, but probably as many as they thought necessary for their purposes, or felt able to assist. The number has probably not been small. Thus it will be found that a large, and unprecedented number have, within a few years, by the contributions and prayers of the Church, been consecrated to this holy and important cause—enough to mark this as a peculiarity of the age in which we live, and a prominent sign of the times, promising the most important results. Nay—it has already had important results, for many of the pastors of the churches, and some of the noblest men in the Missionary field, have thus been trained for their work—men, who would have been left in obscurity, and comparative uselessness, but for such means of education. The prose-

cution of this work promises to bless the world for a long time to come.

*The Temperance cause is another of the signs of the times,* which bears with tremendous weight upon the interests of souls, and the cause of God on earth. The evil of intemperance had become very extensive and destructive, and no where more so than in those countries which had made the greatest progress in civilization, and the cultivation of the arts and sciences, not even excepting those in which the Gospel was enjoyed in the greatest purity, and had exercised the happiest influence. Such has been the demand for alcoholic drinks, that not only had the fruit of the vine, and the apple been perverted, but the very staff of life, our choicest bread stuffs, were transmuted into liquid poison, and made the destroyers of that life, which God made them to sustain and nourish. This tide of destruction has rolled not only over this land, but over the greater part of Europe, and has not improbably been an engine of greater destruction to happiness and life than the wars which have arisen out of the French revolution; and men have evinced to it as much attachment as the soldiers of Bonaparte did to the glory of their Emperor, or the plunder of the nations. In our own country, this demon is, with good reason, sup-

posed to have destroyed more than thirty thousand lives annually, at an expense of a hundred millions of dollars, besides the misery it has occasioned to wives and widows, and children, and orphans, and the ruin irretrievable and eternal, which it has brought upon souls; for nothing good or holy can abide with intemperance.

Temperance societies have been designed to arrest the progress of this evil, and, if possible, eradicate it; and their success has been marvellous and happy. The amount of good which has been accomplished, has been incalculable; but much, very much remains to be done; and if the cause shall be prosecuted with the diligence which its high importance demands, and the law of kindness and love shall dwell upon the lips of its advocates, and it shall not be made a substitute for religion, pure and undefiled before God and the Father, and be committed to the blessing of the "Father of Lights," who alone is able to crown it with victory, it will go on, and prosper, and be one of the chief glories of this age, and one of the greatest blessings of the following. Christians, however, must take a much deeper interest in it than they have as yet done, or God will rebuke *them* by crowning the *world* with the honour of achieving this blessed reformation. The work will be done.



It is one of the signs of the times, which ought to be studied with close and interested attention. Its bearing on the cause of Christ is direct and important.

Another sign of the times is, the attention which has been paid to the education of the rising generation, particularly by means of Infant and Sabbath schools. The former is a proof of the well founded sentiment, that a child is susceptible of what is properly denominated, education, at a much earlier period than was formerly imagined; and the latter, that the young mind may not only receive intellectual culture at a very early period, but become acquainted with the truths of religion, and be savingly influenced by them. It is no uncommon thing for children of seven or eight years of age to have received more mental cultivation than we formerly looked for at twelve or thirteen. What is *now common*, was *once thought a prodigy* in the development of mind. The history of our Sunday schools furnishes us with multitudes of well authenticated instances of saving conversion, at ages which would formerly have been deemed miraculous. Would time permit, I could detail to you many well attested facts on the subject, some of which have fallen under my own observation. I will, however, only remark, that I have been well acquainted with at

least one instance of conversion between five and six years of age, and that I have known a child of nine years of age, better acquainted with the doctrines of religion, and the system of salvation by Jesus Christ, than two-thirds of the members of most of our churches.

Now, when it is remembered, how early education is commenced—what multitudes are enjoying the benefit of Sabbath schools, and how the system is disseminating itself with the Gospel in every part of the world; and connect it with the promises of God, and the other signs of these latter days, may it not be noted as one of the striking characteristics of the age in which we live? One of the beacon lights which God is hanging out from heaven to show us where we are, and teach us what he expects us to do to promote his cause. Perhaps there is nothing of higher promise connected with the use of means, and allied to the promise, “They shall be all taught of God,” than the instruction provided for the young in the institutions of which I am speaking. What a day will that be for our world when all the children and youth on earth shall be duly instructed in the knowledge of God and salvation, and that instruction shall be sanctified, as we hope it will be, to all who receive it.

Suffer me, before I dismiss the branch of the subject which has engaged our attention this evening, to make a remark or two suggested by it. I say, "Branch of the subject," for there remain a number of interesting and important particulars to which, if the Lord spare us, your attention will be directed in future months.

In the first place, I remark, that there are probably embodied in the particulars which have been mentioned, most of the instrumentalities which God will employ, through the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, to subdue the world to the obedience of faith; and that the means *now* exist in the Church to carry this great purpose of the divine love and mercy into ample effect. There are men enough now in the Church to preach the Gospel to every creature. There are a sufficiency of talents and wealth in the Church to prepare the Scriptures, and put them into the hands of every family on earth, in their own living language, in the course of a few years. Where would be the difficulty of flooding the earth with evangelical tracts? And wherever Missionaries have carried the Gospel, and planted the Church, they have hitherto been able to establish the Sabbath school. The abandonment of unnecessary and destructive drinks alone would

more than furnish the necessary funds. What then is necessary to accomplish the great and glorious object? Piety—Religion enough to consecrate ourselves and all that we have and are, to Him “who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all,” and has promised, “freely to give us all things with him.” Thus God is showing us how this great work may be accomplished.

2. Why is he hanging out this great sign of the Son of Man before our eyes? That we may observe and study its meaning, and learn our duty, while the Son of God exhibits himself to our view, as ready to go before us in the work, and render our feeble efforts efficacious by the power of his Spirit and grace. To tell us that the time has come, and rebuke our unbelief and delay. Would he thus raise the cloud from off the tabernacle of the congregation, if he had not come to lead us onward to Canaan? We can scarcely open the mouth in prayer, before he answers us. Wheresoever we sow the seed he causes it to spring up and bear fruit. If we are still afraid to go on, and possess the land, he will turn us back to wander in the wilderness, and leave our bones to perish there; and when we, an unbelieving generation, are dead, our children shall go in, and possess the land. He thus rebukes our unbelief of the pro-

mises which relate to the kingdom of Christ, and the latter day glory, our blindness to those signs of promise which are exhibited before our eyes, and our tardiness of obedience to his word, and in following the leadings of his providence, which are all encouraging us to hope for the speedy subjection of the world to the cross of Christ, if his people have faith and courage enough to undertake the work.

3. By this great sign, in some one of its aspects, every follower of Christ, however humble, may find some way in which he may be usefully employed for the promotion of the glory of God, and the welfare of our race. The field of operation is so wide that none need be idle. In some one of its allotments he may find a spot which he may advantageously cultivate, if only he has a mind for the work. "The field is the world"—and if we have but one talent, we may find a spot where it may be usefully bestowed. Tell me, is there nothing which *you* can do for the promotion of the cause of Missions, or Bibles, or Tracts, or Sunday schools, or Education, or Temperance? If in all this variety of means for promoting the cause of God and souls, you can do nothing, you must be poor indeed in intellect, and property, and poorer still in piety and heart.

We can all do *something*, and God is loudly calling us to the work both by his Word and providence. “Can ye not discern the signs of the times?”

## LECTURE II.

### EDUCATION.

#### MATTHEW XVI. III.

CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES ?

IN opening this subject, on a former occasion, it was remarked, that every age had some signs, or aspects which were peculiar to itself; and these might be considered as ensigns, hung out by God to be observed and studied by men, for their edification. Such was the case when the Saviour ministered on earth. The lines of divine providence were strikingly drawn, and highly significant, but they seem not to have been observed by the Jewish people, and Christ rebuked them for their blindness and inattention in our text. They were more inexcusable, because these signs were the fulfilment of their own Scriptures.

It was also remarked that the present day had its signs, and that God designed to instruct this generation by them. It was also intimated that these signs were manifold and instructive, and that it was my design, in the selection of this subject, to call your attention to them from time to time. A single one, which was stated in these words, "The great

and successful efforts made to spread abroad among mankind the Gospel of Christ and its blessed influences," was at that time considered. Your attention was particularly directed to the establishment and operation of Bible, Missionary, Tract, Education, and Temperance Societies, and Infant and Sabbath schools, as bearing upon this one great object, happily calculated to facilitate its accomplishment, and furnishing means of usefulness to all God's people.

II. I now proceed to *direct your attention to the subject of Education*. A distinguished British statesman, after the second abdication of Napoleon, and his seclusion in the island of St. Helena, when Europe was enjoying a profound peace, and a deep anxiety pervaded the minds of all its rulers to maintain and confirm it, and when most men supposed that it would be permanent, remarked either doubtfully or prophetically in the British Parliament, "The schoolmaster is abroad in the land," anticipating another struggle, waged upon other principles, more extensive, fierce, and decisive, than that which had been brought to its issue at Waterloo.

But however this may be, "The schoolmaster is abroad in the earth." In few countries, if any on earth, has education been as widely diffused, as in our own. New England has



ong been proverbial for the number and excellency of its schools. Few, or none of its children need be destitute of a common English education. New York has followed close in its wake, if still behind. Pennsylvania has waked up to this important subject, and New Jersey is treading on its heels. Ohio is scarcely second to any out of New England. Kentucky and Tennessee are alive to the subject; and in most of the more recent States, reservations of land furnish a foundation for the establishment of a common school system. And this system is believed to be so homogeneous to our political institutions, and so necessary to their development and permanency, that it will establish itself in our Southern States, notwithstanding all the difficulties connected with the case. It is not improbable that in the course of a few years, such a system will have a legal establishment, and successful operation, in every State in the union, a consummation ardently desired, and anxiously sought by every patriot and Christian.

But the interest excited by the subject has by no means been confined to this country. Education is as widely spread in despotic Prussia, as in this land of liberty, and perhaps not less so in Scotland. In England and France it is extending itself. And there are

*few* countries of Europe where it is not extending itself with more or less rapidity. So wherever the Christian religion is spreading by means of missionary operations, does the missionary establish schools, and the natives, who are uninfluenced by religious considerations, are to some extent following the example. The attention of men has been extensively awakened to the importance of the subject, and is acting under an impulse which will eventually, and probably at no very remote day, pervade every community on earth. And the facility for carrying on the work is very greatly increased in every thickly populated country, by the comparatively recent invention of the Lancasterian or monitorial mode of instruction, by which a few can now perform the work which formerly required the labour of many.

I am not in possession of a sufficiency of statistics on the subject to give you a correct or adequate idea of its progress, and this probably would not be the place to do it. We do, however, know that it is engaging the attention of men to a much wider extent than it ever did, and from its very nature, must spread, perhaps till it shall pervade every community on earth. That the subject is important is universally admitted, but to what extent, and in what

manner, it is to affect the minds, or hearts, or affairs of men, who can tell? That the universal diffusion of education among all the dwellers on earth will produce vast changes in our world is justly anticipated by all who have any tolerable acquaintance with the nature of man, and the history of our world. The maxim that "Intelligence is the life of liberty," and the fact that a portion of the inhabitants of our country are studiously excluded from all intellectual cultivation, and to a lamentable extent, moral also, sufficiently evinces the importance which is attached to the subject in this land.

That the effects of education will partake quite as much of its nature and properties, as of its amount, is susceptible of a moral demonstration by an induction of facts. It is, for instance, true, that the arts which embellish life, and the literature and science, which expand, strengthen, and adorn the mind of man, were never more extensively or successfully taught in Greece, than in the age which immediately preceded the overthrow of her republican institutions, the extinction of her liberties, and the commencement of a downward career, from which, after the revolution of twenty centuries, she has scarcely *begun* to recover. When were the arts and sciences in the zenith of their

glory at Rome? In the death struggle of the republic, and the commencement of her imperial career. The Augustan age is proverbial. Knowledge had never been more successfully cultivated or widely diffused in France, than when her population, like a horde of barbarians, immersed all her own institutions in blood, and rolled, like a wave of destruction, over Europe. Facts of this description, if not quite so striking, might still be multiplied. And it would be highly instructive and useful to study them with close attention. They might furnish us with many a lesson of practical wisdom which it would be worth our while to learn. The universal cultivation of the human mind might raise a race of giants on our earth. But it is to be feared that some of them might be blind, and use their great strength in destroying their fellows; and the residue combine their energies in a vain attempt to scale the heavens and dethrone God.

This stone, and it is neither of diminutive magnitude, nor of small weight, has been set in motion, not only in this land, but in many others, under circumstances, strongly indicative of rapid movement, and a long extended course. I take it for granted that education will progress in our country. Such is our state, and such the feelings of the American

people on the subject, that the schoolmaster will find his way into every part of our widely extended country, and fulfil his office wherever he shall go, even when our population shall be four times doubled. And I doubt not something like this will take place in other parts of the world, if not throughout the whole of it. And I so judge from the thirst of mankind for knowledge, the increased, increasing, and easy intercourse, for commercial or religious purposes, and the anxious desire of some to communicate the knowledge which they possess, to others. This appears to me to be one of the clearest signs of the times in which we live. May we not almost call it an article of American faith? We are fond of anticipating the day as not very distant, when all the nations of the earth shall enjoy civil and religious liberty, and their institutions be formed after the model of our own? And who that dreams of such a consummation, but connects it in his mind with the cultivation of the intellect by education, and the communication of the necessary knowledge on all the subjects connected with it?

That the diffusion of education is to make wonderful and important changes in our world, no one, who has any knowledge on the subject, can, even for a moment, doubt. But who

can tell what their nature and extent will be? Only He who knows the end from the beginning. That it will very deeply affect both the minds and hearts of men, the state of families, the ordinary intercourse of life, the intercourse between nations, the habits of life, the framework of society, and public institutions, both civil and religious, admits of no dispute. The changes will be deep and radical, but their nature and properties, will, under God, depend upon the nature and qualities of the education which shall be communicated. *Men do not gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles.*

Mere intellectual culture never did make men wise or good—never did fit them to fill up the various relations which they sustain to God and each other in a manner calculated to promote the best interests of all concerned. Satan has a gigantic intellect. His angels are his compeers. They have been increasing in intelligence from their creation. The most highly educated among the sons of men on earth, would not, probably, in this respect, compare with the meanest imp of darkness who has been blighted and scathed by the wrath of God. But there is neither society, nor government, nor bliss in hell. The fathers of the French revolution comprised the very *elite* of the eighteenth century for mind, for cultivation, and in-

telligence. Every known art and science was cultivated by them to the utmost extent, and they laboured industriously to infuse their own intelligence into the public mind of France. And what was the result? A Babel—a general overthrow—confusion—blood—misery.—Beautiful France made into a slaughter-house—changed into a Golgotha. The politest nation on earth became the murderers of their race. Every nation around them was robbed of the fruits of the arts, to prove that the French were the best educated and most polished people on earth.

Take another example. The people of Hindostan are among the most ignorant, superstitious, degraded, and immoral people on earth. They are, however, said to possess fine capacities for improvement. They are now, as you know, and for some time have been, subjected to the authority and control of the British government. Influenced either by a desire to do good to this people, or finding it necessary to educate some of them, that they might employ them advantageously in their affairs, they established a Hindoo College in the vicinity of Calcutta. At this institution a number of young men, probably of respectable connexions and talents have been educated. They have been trained in the knowledge of the literature and

sciences of Europe, in addition to the languages of India. The consequence has been, great intellectual improvement, together with great contempt for, and abandonment of, the superstitious notions and practices of their own country. It should here be remarked, that all religious instruction, particularly all connected with the Christian religion, was, for fear of shocking the minds of the pupils and their connexions, and prevent them from embracing the advantages of the institution, carefully excluded from its walls. And what has been the consequence? The rearing of a race of intellectual Atheists. The lights of literature and science dissipated their superstition. It exposed the follies and absurdities which they had been taught in childhood and early youth, without offering them any thing better in its stead, and left them to verify Paul's declaration, "The world by wisdom knew not God." Suffer me to illustrate my position by a few extracts from a speech delivered by Dr. Duff, a Scottish Missionary from India, in the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, in 1835. If you can lay your hands on the whole speech. its perusal will abundantly repay you. "Now, (says he) let us advert to some of the modes of overcoming difficulties like those now stated. I have already shown that the communication



of useful knowledge will demolish the ancient learning and religion of Hindostan. On this subject a grand experiment has been made at the expense of the British government in the metropolis of India. About eighteen years ago there was founded, in Calcutta, a college for educating Hindoo youths, in the literature and science of Europe, apart from religion. The seminary has been attended chiefly by persons of rank, wealth, and influence in society. Here then was a favourable opportunity of ascertaining the power of European knowledge, when brought in contact with the system of Hindooism. The result was precisely such as any one duly acquainted with the subject would confidently anticipate. For the last ten years, class after class has issued forth from this institution, who, by the course of enlightened study pursued, were made alive to the gross absurdities of their own systems. These, therefore, they boldly denounced as masses of imposture and debasing error, and the Brahmans as deceivers of the people, though many of themselves belong to that exalted and sacred class. But no morals or religion having been taught in the institution, the young men were in a state of mind utterly blank as regards moral and religious truth, or moral and religious obligation. They were infi-

dels or sceptics of the most perfect kind, believing in nothing, believing not even in the existence of a Deity, and glorying in their unbelief. Still, their infidelity was of a negative, rather than a positive kind. It was not the hardened infidelity of those who have apostatized from the true religion, but the looser infidelity of minds that had become emptied of a false one. Truth was with them, not a thing positively rejected, but a thing undiscovered, unknown, and therefore not believed. To this class of persons much attention was directed some years ago, and I refer to their case as illustrative of one of the modes of accomplishing our great end. Of the existence of this class I knew nothing, because I had heard nothing, when I first reached my destination. With them and their condition I got acquainted by degrees, visiting the college and conversing with them—meeting with them in government offices and agency houses, as clerks and copyists—and attending various associations which they had formed for debating questions of a literary or political character. In this way I gradually became familiar with their peculiar state of mind—their habitude of thought—their modes of reasoning—their prevailing opinions, with the staple of their knowledge—the subjects that were found most interesting, and the kinds of argument and evi-

dence that proved to them most satisfactory. All subjects seemed to be more or less tolerated but religion. Against religion in every form they raged and raved. They scrupled not to scoff at Christianity, they scrupled not to disavow their disbelief in the very being of a God—thus realizing the condition of men, described by an ancient author, who “Fled from superstition, leapt over religion, and sunk into atheism.”

Such is the testimony of a competent and highly intelligent witness, who had the best opportunities for judging of what mere intellectual cultivation will do towards fitting us for usefulness on earth, and glory in heaven. Let it not be said that these were mere stupid ignorant Hindoos. Nothing can be wider of the truth than such an opinion. Thus, our author, with the best opportunities of forming a just estimate, describes them. “Having in my former intercourse found that, from the metaphysical cast of mind among the higher orders of Hindoos, these young men had studied our writers on mental philosophy with peculiar delight, that several of them had mastered the works of Reid, and Stewart, and Brown, and Locke, in such a way as I do not remember the majority of students attending moral philosophy classes in our universities to have for-

merly mastered them, I had recourse, as a last resort, to a mixed mode of representing what has been termed the *a priori*, or a metaphysical argument for the being of an intelligent First Cause. The young men, for the most part, declared, "We now believe there is a great First Cause, the intelligent Author of all things." Such were these men, and such the effect of mere education, or intellectual culture, upon them.

I am strongly tempted to make you acquainted with the mode and results of the labours of this highly gifted servant of Christ with these young intellectual atheists of India, but time and the particular object I have in view this evening, forbid it. Enough, however, has appeared from well authenticated facts, to prove that the mere cultivation of intellect, or what is understood by mere education, is very far from fitting man even for the filling up in the best manner his earthly relations, much more those higher relations which bind him morally to his fellows, and his God. It is in danger of blotting out the hopes of his immortality, the higher and true style of his nature, and reducing him to the ultimate level of the brutes which perish.

I may here be asked, are you the advocate of ignorance? Would you deprive the rising,

and following generations of mental culture? Would you close up our schools, academies, and colleges? Would you take from the schoolmaster his vocation? Not at all—I would increase their number—I would elevate the character of intellectual cultivation—I would, however, make this sign of our times a bow of promise in our heavens, and not a baleful meteor, portending ruin and death. I would not entrust the fortunes of our country, and of our race, to the mere *schoolmaster—the man of mere figures and letters*. It is all idle and vain, and worse than either, to attempt to train the immortal mind as if it were a mere intellectual spark to be blown into a flame, which will be for ever extinguished by the cold damps of death.

Am I again asked, Are not the institutions of this land the fruit of mental culture? Were not the fathers of our country men of education and intelligence? Is not intelligence the life of liberty? Is there a hope that the other nations of the earth will ever be thus blessed, unless the mass of the people are educated? I admit all you can say in favour of education. I bless God that the schoolmaster is abroad. May his *company* become a regiment, a brigade, a well organized and numerous army.

Still, let it be remembered, that the fathers

of our country were as distinguished for their high virtue, religious knowledge, and evangelical purity, as for their mental cultivation and intelligence. They had their schools from the beginning; but the schoolmaster stood before his pupils with the book of God in his hand, and the young mind received a large portion of its intelligence from the pages of inspiration. Thus were the men trained who formed our institutions. These had all received their "form and pressure" before French infidelity had banished the Bible from our schools. We should wait long before we should receive such institutions from the boasted intelligence of men who have been educated under different auspices. And God knows whether the institutions which were thus built up under the divine smiles, would have endured to the present day, if the Lord had not corrected our folly, and saved us from its consequences, by the establishment of Sabbath schools, thus bringing our children and youth into the connexion of God's instructions, from which they had been excluded by the banishment of the divine oracles from our primary schools. May the correction be received with humility and thankfulness, and the lesson not be lost upon us.

We owe much to education, but more to the Father of our spirits, who has blessed us

with the light of the Sun of Righteousness. But we owe nothing to infidelity. We should have waited long enough for such institutions as we enjoy, if we had expected to derive them from such a source. The ordering of our lot has been marvellous both with respect to time and circumstances. I consider it among the special mercies of God that this country was not colonized until the Reformation had obtained a firm footing in Europe, and brought our fathers here enlightened by the truth and grace of God. Otherwise we should have closely resembled Mexico, and the South American states. The Spaniards were as enlightened then as the English, in every thing excepting the knowledge of salvation. It was a circumstance no less merciful that our revolution was achieved, while the infidelity which has since deluged Europe, and shaped its revolutions, was mainly confined to its higher and educated circles, and had scarcely reached even *that* class here. If that great event had been delayed even *a quarter of a century*, the result *might*, and probably *would* have been very different. At all events the revolutions through which other nations have subsequently passed, have had very different results. In no one instance have they resulted in the establishment of institutions which have fulfilled the wishes, and realized the hopes of

the enlightened friends of liberty, order, and religion. Look at France, Spain, Portugal, Naples, Mexico, and the South American States. They have all passed through revolutions, and some of them through several. And now, tell me, upon which of these countries does your eye rest with complacency? Of which of all of them would you say, There do I desire to dwell? Many of them are fair, fertile, and salubrious. But which of them will bear a favourable comparison with this land of your birth or adoption?

And whence arises the difference? I will tell you, and I challenge contradiction. Here only was there religious light to direct and sanctify mere knowledge. This, of all of them, was the only land of Bibles. No where else did the young receive the knowledge of God, pure from the heavenly fountain, with the elements of their education. Our fathers only, of all the men of revolutions, had the grace not only to appeal to God for the rectitude of their intentions, but to put the issue into the hands of the God of the Bible with frequent fasting humiliation, and prayer, and to implore on it continually the healthful spirit of his grace. In this spirit were the foundations of our institutions laid, and under these auspices was the edifice reared. Even men who were not dis-



tinguished for piety or religious zeal felt the force of the principle. Hear what Franklin said in the convention which formed the constitution under which we still live. It was when that assembly was perplexed, and it seemed exceedingly doubtful whether they would be able to agree on any thing. "In this situation of this assembly, groping as it were, in the dark, to find political truth, and scarce able to distinguish it when presented to us, how has it happened, sir, that we have not hitherto once thought of humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate our understandings? In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room, for the Divine protection! Our prayers, sir, were heard; and they were graciously answered. All of us, who were engaged in the struggle, must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favour. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten that powerful friend? Or do we imagine we no longer need his assistance? I have lived, sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, *That God governs in the affairs of men.* And if a sparrow cannot fall to the

ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid?"

You find nothing like this in the other revolutions to which I have referred. So far as they were loosed from the trammels of Catholic superstition, they were imbued with the principles and spirit of infidelity. Such were the *Illuminati* of France and Germany, the *Liberals* of Spain and Portugal, and the *Carbonari* of Italy. The revolutions of Mexico and South America were carried on upon the same principles. God seems to have put the mark of his divine reprobation upon these vain attempts; and appears to have established it as an axiom in human affairs, that men shall walk safely and comfortably by no light which they have not borrowed from the Sun of Righteousness. My dear hearers, you may educate men as highly as you please—you may rear every man amid the splendours of science—you may pour into every human mind all the lights of literature and science, and deny him the light of revelation, and leave his heart uncultivated by the grace of God, and you make him a blind giant, or arm him with greater power to do evil. This is the law of moral and intellectual existence; and the increasing experience of mankind will illustrate and verify it. The

perfections and word of God are guarantees of its truth.

While, therefore, we attach all due importance to education, and labour to cultivate our own minds, and facilitate the cause of education among our fellow creatures to the extent of our ability, let us beware how we entertain the vain imagination, that man needs nothing more to fit him for his highest destinies, either here or hereafter, than the mere cultivation of his intellect. God has furnished us with a sufficiency of light on the subject, to convince us of the utter fallacy of such a hope. The experiment has been fairly tried, and men need not be deceived on the subject, unless they are wilfully so. It has long ago been determined that we shall reap what we sow. Experiments enough have been tried to convince the most sceptical. The field has been sown broad-cast with tares, but it has not yielded wheat. The law is as well established in morals as in nature, that every seed will produce fruit after its kind, and if Christian men will consent that infidels shall educate their children, or direct their education, let them blame themselves for the unblest results which shall flow from it. Let it not be believed, even for a moment, that because the constitution of our government has wisely guaranteed to every man the rights of

conscience, and denied itself all connexion with any sect, that we are therefore a nation of atheists, and that we are on that account bound to banish God and his revealed will from our schools. They had well nigh succeeded some years ago in persuading us that this was a constitutional axiom. Nothing however can be more fallacious. Christian freemen better understand their rights. They know that they are entitled to say what books their children shall read, and in what principles they shall be educated. And if it were not so, infidels would enjoy a constitutional pre-eminence over all others. They would then have the right of pre-occupying the minds of the young, and render the introduction of better principles almost hopeless. This, however, can never be conceded under a government of equal laws.

Let Christians reflect deeply and seriously on this subject. It is not among the least interesting of the signs of the times. God has graciously given them a sufficiency of light on this all important subject, to enable them to discern the nature and tendency of the principle, and to understand their own duty with respect to it. He has put this "Salt of the earth" into their keeping, and made them responsible for its preservation, and due dissemination. They have it in their power to give a direction and char-

acter to education in this land which shall, under the Divine blessing, preserve and propagate the knowledge, to the sanctified use of which we are indebted, not only for our liberty, but for those institutions which give to liberty itself its highest value. These can be secured to us by no other means. Constitutions and laws have no binding force without morals, and morals can never be maintained without divine sanctions. The morality of the Bible itself would not outlive a single generation unless it were sustained in the consciences of men by the authority of God. Christian men can do much to maintain this position, and God and their country's highest interests require it at their hands. And if they can do nothing else, let them see to it that their own children do not lack culture in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Piety and patriotism both require this at their hands.

And let it be distinctly remembered that no time is to be lost. The children have been born, and are probably *now* receiving their education, who will exercise a decisive and controlling influence over the destinies of our country, and with them, over no small portion of our race. Let them be *rightly* educated with a view to this high destiny, and the eyes of the nations will not be directed in vain to

this country. We shall solve the problems, whether mankind shall enjoy free institutions, and whether the Gospel of Christ can maintain itself in purity and power by its own energy and sanctified use. We are at present emphatically "the city set on a hill." If we fulfil our high trust, we shall be a glorious example, to be followed by multitudes, and men shall call us blessed. But if we fail, we shall blast some of the fairest hopes which the friends of freedom and religion have ever entertained. And all experience and observation prove incontestably that we shall fail, and miserably fail, unless the mass of our population early learn the knowledge and fear of the Lord. Mere education will not save us, nor will it save the world. That high honour God has reserved for his Christ, and no sons of Belial shall share it with him. The world's light must come from heaven. Its redemption is by the cross. Diseased human nature will never be cured but by the knowledge of the Son of God, and that knowledge will rarely be received, when the mind and heart have been previously filled with, and perverted by, a mere literary or scientific education. If the people of God will not cast divine salt into these fountains of knowledge to sweeten their bitter waters, they

will have their children to drink of the unwholesome streams till they perish.

Finally, we may learn from this subject the importance and necessity of sustaining with the utmost vigour, and to the utmost extent, our Sabbath schools. When Christians foolishly, if not wickedly, suffered the Bible and its hallowed influences, to be banished from our primary schools, God graciously led to the adoption of this system to aid his depressed cause, and counteract the influence of irreligion and infidelity. And no one can tell how much good has been effected by it. It will probably be long before the Bible will again be in general use in our schools, nor will it be effected without a long and severe struggle. But shall the young be neglected till that object is effected? That would postpone the day indefinitely. The Bible will be restored to its place and ascendancy by the hands of those who shall be trained to its love and knowledge in our Sabbath schools. The Church has not yet done half its duty in this field of labour and Christian enterprise. The number of those to be benefitted by this means can easily be not only doubled, but quadrupled. Teachers and scholars can both be obtained, if the necessary exertions are only made. And can the duty be neglected without sin? It cannot be with-

out inconceivable danger and loss. Let it then be prosecuted with all the zeal and diligence which its importance demands, and let it not be delayed, for the enemy stands ready with his tares. Let the work be done, and speedily, and well done, and the prediction will be the more speedily accomplished, "They shall be all taught of God."



## LECTURE. III.

### RECKLESSNESS OF HUMAN LIFE.

#### MATTHEW XVI. III.

##### CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

MOST of my audience will probably recollect that their attention has, on two former occasions, been directed to the subject, which is to be further prosecuted this evening. On the first of these occasions, the great Missionary aspect of the times was considered. On the second, the subject of Education engaged our attention. It appeared that, it had excited a much higher interest, and obtained a much more extensive diffusion among mankind than during any former period of the history of our race; that from the present state of the world, and the general and growing importance which men attached to the subject, it would probably diffuse itself over the whole world; that it will very deeply affect both the minds and hearts of men, the domestic relations, the ordinary intercourse of life, the relations between nations, the habits of life, and public institutions, both civil and religious; that changes, both deep and radical, will be produced, but that their nature

and properties, will, under God, depend upon the nature and qualities of the education which shall be communicated—that mere intellectual culture never did make men wise and good, nor fit them to fill up the various relations which they sustain to God and each other in a manner calculated to promote the best interests of all concerned; that God's revealed will, contained in the sacred Scriptures, must lie at the foundation of all really good education, and that it is the duty, as well as the interest, of all who know its value, to seek its accomplishment. I now proceed to direct your attention,

III. *To the small value which is apparently attached to human life in our country.*

Of all mere earthly good, life is the most valuable, and it is so esteemed by men. Hence the dread which men feel about losing it, and the pains which they take, and the expense which they incur, to preserve it. This probably arises, in no small degree, from the uncertainty under which they labour with respect to their condition after this life, and the connexion which they suppose to exist between the manner in which they shall pass their lives here, and their condition hereafter. But, however men may feel or act with respect to the subject, God evidently sets a very high value on human life, and has guarded it by the most

solemn sanctions. This was his language to Noah on the subject, immediately after the flood, and was therefore designed to bind all his posterity. "And surely your blood of your lives will I require, at the hand of every beast will I require it, and at the hand of man; at the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man. Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God made he man." This principle was afterwards incorporated with the decalogue. Three exceptions were made to the rule. 1. When a man ignorantly, and without design, was the cause of another's death. 2. When it became absolutely necessary to take the life of another for the preservation of one's own life. 3. If a man should slay a thief who attempted to break into his house at night. For such cases the cities of refuge were provided.

From this it will appear that the law by which God protects human life is an original divine enactment, prior to, and independent of, the Jewish dispensation, and must, therefore, unless God has repealed it, which he has never done, be still in force. It is not to be denied that the Gospel enforces every principle of the *moral law*, and makes provision to sustain it by the highest motives, while it abrogates every

thing which was merely ceremonial under the former dispensation. It was objected against the Gospel plan of salvation by grace that it made void the law. To which the Apostle Paul replies, "Do we then make void the law by faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." That is, the Gospel provides an adequate satisfaction for the penalty of the law by the death of Christ, and secures a better obedience on the part of man, by higher motives, from the influence of the grace of God on his heart. And while we admit that the Gospel throws an additional safeguard around the life of man, and renders it greatly more probable that he will regard the interests of his fellow creatures with favour, in proportion to the influence which the grace of God exercises on his heart, we must at the same time deny that it has freed either saint or sinner from the moral obligation of obedience, or the transgressor from the penalty by which God sanctions his law. For what purpose was the law given? Paul tells us in writing to Timothy. "Knowing this, that the law was not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for ungodly and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers;" and after enumerating a number of other crimes, he adds,

“And if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust.” So that it is plain to the least degree of discernment, that “The glorious Gospel of the blessed God,” has not only not abrogated the law, but established it. Nay, the blessed Saviour himself says, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled.” That is, the moral law shall endure while God and intelligent creatures exist.

It would then be reasonable to suppose that that branch of the law which guards human life would be respected by men as extensively as they had knowledge of it, particularly where its precepts were inculcated, and its importance and sanctions understood, especially where the great body of the community were intimately connected with the enactment of laws, and equally affected by their character and observance. If this be so, then should human life no where be more sacredly regarded, or be considered as surrounded by stronger safeguards than in the land in which we dwell.

No where else are freer and happier institutions enjoyed. We are in the habit of considering the providence of God as having been directly and benignly concerned in their establishment. We view with unfeigned admiration the times selected by God for the discovery and settlement of our country, the revolution which separated us politically from Great Britain, and the formation of our government. If America had been discovered sooner, or the northern part earlier settled, we should probably have been a nation of ignorant and superstitious Catholics. If the revolution and the establishment of our institutions had been only a quarter of a century later, the deleterious influence of infidelity would have been deeply felt, and left its broad mark upon every thing.

Our federal constitution, with a single exception, recognises and establishes, on the broadest principles, every human right. In no country on earth is so large a proportion of the population so nearly concerned in the enactment of all laws by which the land is governed, through the extension of the elective franchise. Our laws are, in the main, good and equal, and calculated to promote the interests, and secure the rights of all. In no other country have the people a deeper interest in maintaining the supremacy of the law,

and the administration of equal justice. We are distinguished among the nations of the earth for the extension of education, and the dissemination of intelligence among the mass of the people. And no people better understand, and more highly prize their rights. We also have the sacred Scriptures, that volume of divine wisdom, together with all the ordinances and appliances of revealed religion, in as pure a state, and rich abundance, as they have ever been enjoyed on earth. Nor have they been without the divine blessing. And with respect to human life, we know that God has guarded it by an express law, the penalty of which he has declared to be death, and added to it, that no murderer shall inherit the kingdom of heaven, and the law of every State and Territory in this wide spread union denounces the penalty of death against every murderer. And yet it is a fact, that notwithstanding all the light which we enjoy, and all the safeguards which the laws both of God and man have thrown around human life, a large number of lives are yearly destroyed either by recklessness or violence.

I have not been able to possess myself of the statistics on the subject, but it is known to all who hear me, that a number perish yearly by steamboats on the waters of our country.

I speak not here of the ordinary dangers and casualties connected with this species of navigation, whether on the ocean, or on our lakes and rivers, but of those which arise from the action of fire. Several of these vessels have been destroyed by fire, and with them a considerable number of human beings. And explosions, more or less destructive, have been so frequent during the season of navigation, as almost to be expected as articles of weekly intelligence. And unless the destruction of human life has been very extensive, or the circumstances very peculiar, it has soon passed away with trifling animadversion, been soon forgotten, slight investigations as to the cause or blame worthiness have ensued, and but little pains have been taken to guard against the evil in future, whether it has resulted from defective construction, or carelessness or recklessness on the part of those who have had the management of the concern. Thus have many hundreds of lives been destroyed, and multitudes of human beings, in the freshness of their sins, been hurried into the presence of their Maker, to give an account of the deeds done in the body, without time for repentance or warning to prepare. But it seems neither to have diminished this mode of travel, nor to



have increased the anxiety of those who were exposed to its dangers.

And yet, most of the disasters which have occurred have arisen from the inordinate speed with which they have been attempted to be propelled, or, an utter inattention to the state of the machinery. Explosions would rarely, if ever, take place, with a competent quantity of water in the boiler, and that is a fact which, ordinarily, may easily be ascertained. But, with the love of mastery impelling them, men are often wilfully blind to the true state of the case, or, through the hurry produced by the eagerness of competition, they forget their duty, even when many lives are dependant on it. In most cases, the disasters which occur, arise from these causes. Nor are the managers of these vessels the only ones who are to blame. Passengers, not only stand by and witness the hazardous and reckless competition which takes place, without remonstrance, but they urge them on to more inordinate exertion, even to the point of destruction. Nay, in commencing a journey, they will prefer the master who will wage the strife, and the vessel which promises success in doing it. And where are the restraints which are imposed on the practice, either by public sentiment, or by law?

This is one of the evil spirits of the age in

which we live, which needs to be allayed; one of the portentous signs of these times; one of the forms of *hurry* into which the human mind has been thrown, and under the influence of which it is driving headlong, at every object which presents itself to view, without regard to duty or consequences. Think it not strange, therefore, that a minister of the Gospel should rebuke this spirit from the heights of Zion, when it has brought the guilt of so much blood upon a land so deeply indebted to the Divine goodness as ours. I refer to the subject, to show that human life is valued among us at a low rate, inducing greatly less care of it than its importance demands. Such accidents, (as they are called,) as occur, almost weekly, on our Western waters, without giving rise to legal investigation, or strong animadversion in the public prints, would, in almost every other civilized country, occasion the closest legal inquiry, and be frequently followed by condign punishment. Here, even the public press, which boasts so high a degree of independence, can, with difficulty, be brought to publish well authenticated statements of facts, where influential individuals or companies are concerned. For this reason, no wholesome public sentiment can be formed on the subject, which would constrain public functionaries to do their duty.

A still more distressing and alarming feature, in this sign of the times, may be found in the lawless violence with which individuals and companies assail each other's lives, and the rareness with which it is followed by adequate punishment. In a country of *laws*, and *boasting* itself, on that account, to be the happiest and freest on earth, many constitute themselves their own law, and judge, and executioner of their own passionate and bloody purposes. You will readily call to mind the Vicksburg tragedy. It is true, the unhappy sufferers were only a company of gamblers, and the actors professed to be influenced by a desire to maintain the virtue and safety of the youth upon whom the harpies were preying. But who would, or could, live in a community, the very virtue of which was thus lawless and bloody? And how ready were they, in other places, to follow the unblest example, and with what difficulty were they restrained? It seemed as if a sympathetic spirit pervaded the land about those days. Baltimore was without law or order for several days, nor were they restored till several lives were lost. The same spirit gave rise to the burning of the convent at Charlestown, in Massachusetts, and the election and flour mobs in New York. Even our own peaceful city, as you know, was, for several nights, in so disturbed a state as to

excite deep and serious alarm. Strong apprehensions even began to be entertained by the friends of order throughout our land, that the time was rapidly passing away when every man could sit in peace under his own vine and fig-tree, without any to molest or make him afraid. And, when we began to hope that this foul spirit had departed, we became painfully convinced of his presence and influence, at Alton—the more painfully, because a minister of the Gospel, and of our own Church, died there, “as a fool dieth,” with arms in his hands, which he had, a few moments before, probably used against a fellow creature. These things are calculated to humble us before God, as they have disgraced us before the civilized world. Our blessed institutions, themselves, have been impugned on account of it, and our citizens have been obliged to hang their heads in shame and mortification before foreigners, who attribute it all to those very institutions. And, what is worse than all, the majesty of our injured laws has not been vindicated. Blood still cries from the ground to the God of life!

But this is not all. Blood has been shed, in not a few instances, by individuals, as well as by mobs, who were inflamed by passion; and that, not merely when they have been brought into sudden collision with each other, and un-

der the influence of highly excited passions, but they have gone about the work of death, with the cool deliberation of the practiced duellist, the assassin by trade, or the butcher to the slaughter of an ox. Men do not even seek the darkness and secrecy of night for the performance of such works, but they let the light of day shine upon them, and the eyes of men see them. Within a few months, such a tragedy was enacted in one of the legislative halls of our country. What will, and ought, the world to think and say, when it is told, that the Speaker, the highest officer in one of our legislative assemblies, in the presence of all his brethren, and while the body was in session, rose up from his official seat, walked deliberately across the floor to where his companion was seated, and stabbed him to the heart! What must we think of the morals of our country, in this respect, when the editor of a leading public journal can publish to the world, that he, for hours, endeavored to find a man, that he might maim or kill him, because he would not meet *him* in a duel, while he continues his occupation, with a slightly diminished subscription list, and is sustained by a large number of patrons? You may, probably, find his paper in most of the reading-rooms of Philadelphia, and it would not surprise me, if it

were the first paper inquired after by many. At what rate is human life valued in our country, when a member of Congress can tell his constituents, and through them the American people, that he, and, by implication, all others, go to the seat of our national government, in the discharge of their public duties, not under the protection of law, but in dependence on the strength or skill of their own arms? and who denies or rebukes the assertion? Nay, he avers, that his constituents approve of it, and will sustain him in it. God grant that he may find himself mistaken.

That I am not overstating the case is evident from the declared fact, that in large portions of our country, pistols and bowie-knives are the ordinary travelling companions of many; and that, in several places, many men go thus armed in their daily avocations. If these things are not so, why do we almost daily read in our public prints, of one being stabbed, and another shot down in the public streets? And why, in several of the States of the Union, have the legislatures passed, or attempted to pass, laws to prevent, not the use, but the wearing of such weapons? And why, if men are not afraid of personal violence, or if they do not intend to commit violence on others, do they go about, among their fellow creatures,

thus prepared for it? Thus scores, perhaps hundreds, perish in our country every year. These will be dark lines in the history of our age and country; and they cannot be obliterated. And, if this wave of blood rolls on, it will wear for itself deeper and broader channels, until this declaration of God shall be verified in our country, "The Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth, also, shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain." Are we not in danger of such a visitation?

I add but one item more to the black catalogue, and I do it with deep pain, because it implicates a class who occupy high places, claim great deference, and the influence of whose example, whether for good or evil, is not easily calculated—I mean, *the practice of duelling*. I would define a duel to be, a personal contest between two human beings, with deadly weapons, who consider themselves and their personal concerns to be of such immense importance as to render it unsafe and improper to have them regulated or controlled by the laws either of God or man, and therefore, throwing off all the restraints imposed by either, take the whole subject into their own hands, and murder each other, to prove that they are gentlemen. The spirit which induces the practice is a com-

pound of pride, malevolence, vain glory, and lawlessness, which unfit a man for being a wholesome member of any society, or from filling up any of his relations in a becoming manner. What is to hinder a man, who for certain purposes feels himself to be above all laws, both human and divine, to trample upon all laws, when his convenience or passions shall prompt him to do so? what security has a country that such a man will fulfil any trust committed to him? that he will not stop by the way to throw away his life, or make himself a murderer? It is evident that the law of God will not restrain him, for he sins knowingly and wilfully in its very face. The law of friendship does not control him, for many a friend has thus fallen by the hand of his friend. The duellist is not bound by the ties which unite hearts in the dearest, sweetest, and most holy relations which are known on earth, as many a heart-broken widow, and hapless orphan can testify. The eternal and unmitigated wrath of God does not stay his hand, for he knows that "no murderer hath eternal life," and yet performs the deed. He knows that no duellist can stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and yet he sends his fellow creature there without the possibility of repentance.

But however wicked and cruel the spirit may



be in itself, and however inconsistent with all law, human and divine, and however hostile to the peace and order of society, and the comfort of individuals and families, it unhappily exists, exercises an extensive influence, and bears deadly fruit, in this land in which we have a sufficiency of light to understand our rights and duties, and law enough to secure our persons and privileges. Even here, many claim the privilege of being so far above law as to be both the judge and executioner in their own cause, even to the taking of the life of a fellow creature—a right which no just or equal law ever concedes to the most upright and intelligent man in community, if the interest of a dollar were involved in it. The presumption upon which the law is founded is correct. How then can a man be entrusted to weigh a point of honour, a mere punctilio, in his own cause, when in almost all cases, false pride sits as judge, and passion acts the double part of witness and executioner? Yet in this self-constituted, partial, and doubly-unlawful court, men are every month tried for their lives, and executed. And while the blood is flowing, and widows and orphans stand by, and weep in speechless agony, the enlightened freemen of these United States pass by on one side, and her enlightened Chris-

tians on the other; but they are both mute, or speak in so low an under-tone that nobody hears them. There has indeed been a little drowsy grumbling on account of a recent exhibition of blood at the seat of our national government, but not enough to prevent that government, with the exception of our time honoured Judiciary, (and may God bless them for it,) from officially honouring the name and obsequies of him who *happened* to be the victim, and continuing to sit in the council of official brotherhood with the survivors, as if there were no stain of blood on their souls. And a portion of our countrymen will before long have an opportunity of proving at what rate they value human blood, thus shed, when these men shall again present themselves before them for their suffrages.

My dear hearers, the American people have many stains of this kind fixed upon them. This is not the first, nor the tenth, nor the hundreth instance which has occurred. The lawyer, the physician, the legislator, the merchant, and the planter, have all been the worshippers and the victims of this bloody Moloch. And why are these things so? Is the disease incurable? Is it impossible to rectify the evil? If the body of the American people do not approve of the hor-

rid practice, they can easily abate the nuisance. They can create a public sentiment on the subject before which no man can stand. Let the subject be presented before the public in its true light by the press. Let the law declare every survivor in such a conflict a murderer, and deal with him accordingly. Let it assign a place for life in the penitentiary, where death does not ensue, to both principals and accessaries. Let judges and jurors render verdicts according to law and evidence. Let there be no pardoning power which can reach the case. Let all the parties concerned in duels be for ever incapacitated from holding any office of profit or trust. Let the public press cease to parade duels before the world as articles of intelligence. Let the public treat them with the scorn they deserve—and let survivors be made responsible for the support of the widows and orphans of their victims, and the practice would not long exist, much less be held in honour. And if it can be suppressed, who should be held responsible for its continuance?

I have thus endeavored, my dear hearers, to hold up to your view one of the dark signs of the times in which we live—one of the clouds which obscure our country's glory—one of the evils which mar our happy lot, hinder our

prosperity, and may draw down divine judgments upon us. My apology, as a minister of the gospel, if it be necessary to make one, for exhibiting such a subject in such a place, is, the nature and notoriety of the facts which I have stated, their bearing upon the welfare of our country, their unhappy influence on the institutions of religion, the unfrequency of their being pressed upon the attention of the people, and the command of God, "Tell my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins"—"Give them warning from me." I do, therefore, give you warning from God. We are, verily, guilty in this thing, and should repent, and do works meet for repentance. It is the sin of our day, and of our nation. The whole land is implicated. Every rank is implicated in this sin, in one form or other, for we have at least been looking on, and seeing it, and by our silence, conniving at it, instead of lifting up our voices like trumpets against it. I speak it with boldness, but with great sorrow, the public sentiment of our country favours the light estimation in which human life is held. The proof of it is found in the facts, that however clear the proof of blood guiltiness may be, it is difficult to find a jury willing to convict the culprit, if the offence be capital, although jurors

have bound themselves by the oath of God, to bring in a verdict according to law and evidence—and greatly more pains is taken to procure pardon, or mitigation of penalty, in such cases, than to bring the most grievous offenders to justice, even if the welfare of society, as well as the laws of God and man, demand their condign punishment. I should think it strange that sinful man should pretend to be so much more merciful than that God who gave his only begotten Son to die for us, did I not remember that “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” If this were not so, it would be impossible that men should feel a deeper sympathy for criminals, than for the hapless victims of their crimes. I consider this spurious sympathy as a kind of premium for half the blood that is shed by private hands in our country. You would find very few men ready to fight duels, or stab or pistol a fellow creature in the streets, if they expected to be hung for it. Put them under the wholesome restraint of the fear of the halter, and they would soon learn to set a higher value on the lives of their neighbours. They would then weigh them in opposite scales with their own—and their self-esteem would become the pledge of their neighbour’s safety.

What, then, can be done to give greater security to human life? to repress the lawless and violent, and keep back their hands from shedding blood? I have already, in part, answered this inquiry. I add, that God claims a special right in the life of man, and has put it under the shield of his Divine protection: "At the hand of every man's brother will I require the life of man." The whole community, and every man in it, is made responsible to God for the personal security of all its members, and, if a human life be unlawfully taken, the guilt rests on the community, until the culprit is sought out with all proper diligence, and the offender be duly punished. Let this sentiment be faithfully inculcated; let conscience be enlightened on the subject; let it be connected, as it should be, with our primary relations to God; let it be impressed on the minds of the young, as a Divine requirement; make them acquainted with the fact, that they have been constituted the responsible guardians of the lives of their fellow creatures by a Divine statute; let the spurious morality, which learns its duty from the sympathies of a corrupt heart, be exploded;—and human life would cease to be so lightly and wickedly assailed, and so wantonly thrown away.

Above all, let it be remembered, that human life derives its principal value from the worth and state of the soul. The worth of the soul no man can measure, who cannot measure the amount of its enjoyment or suffering in an endless state of existence, or, duly estimate the value of what Christ has done and suffered for its salvation. Its salvation depends upon its state at death; so that, he who cuts off the life of man in his sins, becomes guilty of his eternal damnation, by cutting off the possibility of his salvation. This, I suppose, to be one of the reasons why God has, with more than paternal solicitude, guarded the life of man; and this is the principal reason why I have laboured to expose so many of the ways in which it is wantonly and wickedly abridged in this age and country. May we not read God's righteous retribution for our wanton disregard of human life, in the blood and disasters connected with the seemingly interminable war which we are waging against the remnant of a tribe of Indians; and the recklessness with which a portion of our citizens appear to be anxious to hurry us into a war with a foreign nation? Is it not time we should learn the worth of souls, and avert the wrath of God, by caring for that upon which the welfare of souls depends—human life? Let the lesson, then, be duly and dili-

gently inculcated. And let us endeavour, if we cannot remove this portentous cloud, pregnant with wrath for blood, from our horizon, to spring across it the bow of promise, by seeking for our country the forgiving love and the restraining grace of God.



## LECTURE IV.

### GOD'S FROWNS AGAINST COVETOUSNESS.

#### MATTHEW XVI. III.

##### CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

ON the last occasion, when this subject engaged our attention, we considered "the cheap rate at which human life was held in our country," as one of the unhappy signs of the times in which we live. It was then remarked, that notwithstanding the strictness and care with which the Lord had guarded human life, there were four ways in which it was wantonly assailed, and foolishly or wickedly thrown away in this age and country: viz. "by the reckless manner in which steamboats are navigated upon the waters of our country; by the ungovernable passions of mobs; by the unlawful possession and use of deadly weapons in the ordinary intercourse of life; and, by the practice of duelling. It appeared, that hundreds of lives were thus wickedly sacrificed every year; and that this arose, principally, from the disregard of God's law on the subject, and the difficulty of procuring the adequate punishment of

those who treated the lives of their fellow creatures so lightly.

The picture, which truth and duty obliged me to present to your view was both horrible and appalling. It is a melancholy consideration, that in a country so enlightened, so blessed of God in every respect, life, so valuable on every account, should be the sport of diabolical passions; and that a people, calling themselves Christian, should so far tolerate the evil as to make it the sin of the nation. That it should subject us to the frowns of Jehovah, ought not to be surprising, when it is remembered, that he values the soul of man at the price of his Son's blood. There is enough in this subject, as connected with our country, to make us mourn and tremble. This, however, is not the *only sign* which is worthy of our serious attention as Christians, and American citizens. I design to direct your attention, in the prosecution of my object, from time to time, to some of the aspects of Divine Providence towards our land. These, if they are carefully and attentively studied, may furnish us with some important lessons of practical wisdom. Says the Psalmist, in the view of God's dealings with the children of Israel, "Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness

of the Lord." The folly, as well as wickedness, of those who disregard the judgments of God, is declared in these words: "Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." The lines of Divine Providence do, at least, sometimes teach men their characters, and the light in which God views them. Is there any thing, then, in God's dealings with us, which is worthy of special notice? Yes, my hearers, there are several things. Let me direct your attention,

IV. *To the monied concerns of our country, as the fourth sign of the times.*

There are those now living, who have a distinct recollection of our condition when we came out of the perils and trials of the revolutionary struggle, few in number, the country almost a wilderness, well nigh without law or government, deeply involved in debt, and with few resources. The man who possessed a few hundreds of dollars thought himself well off; and the possessor of a few thousands was esteemed rich. What changes have taken place? A few years have passed, and the little one has become a thousand. Our population has more than twice doubled. The wilderness has, very

extensively disappeared, and the fruitful field has taken its place; a regular and happy frame of government has been organized; wholesome laws have been enacted; villages, towns, and cities, have every where sprung up; schools, academies, and colleges, have been instituted in every part of the land; facilities for intercommunication between every part of this widely extended country, by turnpikes, railroads, canals, and navigation by steam, have never been exceeded in any age or country; and, agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, have been pursued with untiring industry, and great success. The improvement and advancement of this country have had no parallel in the history of nations.

The speaker can remember when the States of Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, Indiana, Missouri, Arkansas, Illinois, Michigan, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, half of Pennsylvania, and all of New York lying west of Utica, were a wilderness. When there was neither turnpike, railroad, canal, or steamboat, in the Union. When any species of manufacture scarcely extended beyond the family. When there were, probably, not as many traders in the United States as the city of New York might have furnished two years ago. When, the colleges of the country consisted of, Har-

vard, Yale, Dartmouth, Columbia, Princeton, the University of Pennsylvania, and William and Mary's, in Virginia. And, when there was no post-office in the State of New York west of Schenectady.

What amazing changes have taken place! greater, perhaps, in nothing, than in the increase of wealth. This may be attributed, under God, to the character of our population, the spirit of the age, and the state of Europe. The American people were a hardy, enterprising, active, and industrious race of men. The human mind received an impulse at the Reformation which it has never lost. This, was partly owing to the revival of letters, and the greatly extended spread of education; partly to the discovery of America, and the passage to India by the Cape of Good Hope, and the influence of both on commerce, and the art of printing; and partly, to the excitement of the human mind, by the influence of religious principle. This impulse was re-invigorated by our revolution, and strengthened by the course of events which grew out of, and followed it in Europe. I allude, particularly, to the wars connected with the French revolution.

The effect of these upon the American people was circumstantially peculiar, but natural. We were a young, enterprising people, sprung

from a commercial stock, and locally connected with the ocean. The preponderance of the British on that element, made us the carriers of the other nations, and, for certain purposes, of the British themselves; and thus, we became commingled with the commerce of the world. The employment of such vast masses of men in war, sensibly affected the agriculture of Europe, created a demand for our breadstuffs, and quickened us in agricultural pursuits. And the war of 1812, with England, called into existence our manufactures. By this combination of circumstances, we have not only become one of the most active and enterprising nations on the face of the earth, but one of the most successful and prosperous in every branch of productive industry.

The effect of all this has been truly astonishing. Such a career of prosperity has, perhaps, never before been run. The same proportional number has probably, in no other age or country, in an equal space of time, advanced from small beginnings, not only to competence, but to wealth and exuberance. The earth has brought forth by handfuls, and every branch of industry has flourished and been productive. Does the history of nations furnish a parallel to our apparent prosperity, and the buoyancy of our hope of the future, two or three years

ago? Like the Church of Laodicea, we were "rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing." Our "mountain stood strong," and we said, "I shall never be moved." Our prosperity seemed like the waters of the river of Egypt, the source of exhaustless fertility. The harvest was rich and ripe, and the field boundless; and it was but for every man to put in his sickle, and fill his bosom with the sheaves. Any body might grow rich that had the resolution to will it. If a man had skill enough to draw a map of a city on a sheet of paper, he could make a fortune in a month. Our hundreds became thousands, and our thousands were multiplied into millions. The whole public mind was not only agitated under the influence of this unparalleled prosperity, but there was an expansion of grasp, of desire, and of hope, which saw neither end nor limit to the acquisition of this world's goods. Few doubted their ability to obtain their desires, and few were careful to confine their desires within reasonable or moderate bounds. And it seemed, for a time, as if the Lord was about to gratify them to more than the extent of reasonable wishes on the subject. If the wishes of men had been reasonable, multitudes might have said: "Thou hast goods laid up in store for many years; take thine ease." But, while

Providence smiled, few could find it in their hearts to retire from the career they were running. Let it suffice to say, that this mighty river, swelled by a thousand tributary streams, became broader, and deeper, and more rapid, as it rolled along before the admiring, and still longing eyes of our countrymen, as they were moving on with its current.

This flood attained its height about three years ago. There were indeed observed, by nice discerners, some two years before, certain motions about these rolling waters, which indicated, not only the presence of a disturbing force, but the decay of the flood. Then came a sudden sinking of the water, which some called in derision, "a panic," but which wiser men considered, and the event has verified their wisdom, as the precursor of a deep, if not of a rapid decline. It is true, a number of barques were shattered or overwhelmed; but they were represented to have been unsound and feeble. Others ran aground; but they were supposed to have been badly managed, or overloaded. But the hope still was, that the interruption of our prosperity would be very partial and brief. Our spirits were still buoyant, and our hope strong. Still, one change kept following another, but none brought the desired relief.



Our currency and exchanges became deranged. Business became unsafe, interrupted, unprofitable, diminished. The grand productive staple of our country would not command two-thirds of its former price, which rendered it impossible for us to pay our foreign debts, without draining us of the precious metals; deranging further the currency, and depressing the business of the country. The evil was increased, by the necessity which obliged us to import bread-stuffs for the support of human life; by the want of stated and profitable employment for hundreds of thousands of our inhabitants; by the increased price of the necessaries of life, and the diminished means of procuring them; by the stagnation of the productive industry of the country; by the destruction of millions of property, by extensive conflagrations in several of our cities; and, by the lack of that confidence which transfuses life and spirit into all the concerns of life.

Now, be the causes what they may, these are the facts of the case, known, acknowledged, and felt, in every part of our land, and in every department of business, and of life. The change is every where manifest and felt; in the city, and in the country; on the land, and on the water; in the counting-house, in the manufactory, in the workshop, and on the

farm. Without any national disaster, sweeping pestilence, blighting drought, devastating and destructive war, or overwhelming providence, we have, in a comparatively short time, descended, I cannot say, fallen—for we have scarcely felt a shock—from a state of the most high and palmy prosperity, to a state of depression which has deeply affected a whole people in all their interests. Some have been ruined; some have been maddened: all have felt it. It has indeed been a great change. It has come upon us, in a great degree, unexpectedly. Who has, or could have, anticipated it?

I am aware that this change has been attributed to a variety of causes. We have all heard of the United States Bank; the removal of the deposits; the refusal to renew the charter of that institution; the specie circular; the surplus revenue; trading on borrowed capital; over-issues on the part of the banks; the inordinate increase of these institutions; and, the speculations in the public lands. All these have been represented, by one and another, as having contributed to produce this state of things. One has found the cause in one thing; and others, in another. My hearers, however, do not expect *me*, standing on these heights of Zion, to enter into the political or economical

considerations which stand connected with the subject. Nor shall they have occasion, justly, to accuse me of it. This portentous sign of the times, upon which we have fallen, has other aspects, of a more important and solemn character, to which the Christian observer, standing on his watch-tower, may more profitably turn his attention, and from which he may read to his hearers lessons of practical wisdom, involving their highest interests.

Neither our present state, nor the one which preceded it, were irrespective of the government of God, and our allegiance to him. While rain and fruitful seasons, and every earthly good, are Divine gifts, coming down from the Father of lights, "affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground." If God has changed his face towards us, there is a reason for it, and, more than probably, that reason may be found in ourselves. Of the truth of this I am fully persuaded. Will my hearers indulge me with their undivided and prayerful attention, while I endeavour to show why the Lord has brought us into our present circumstances.

The pursuit of wealth among us has been eager. The love of gain has been a perfect passion—the master passion, which, like Aa-

ron's rod, has swallowed up all the others. It has pervaded all ranks and professions. Men of business have been dissatisfied with the slow returns and moderate profits, which were once thought desirable and sufficient, and have spread themselves out, not only to the extent of their capital, but of their credit. Professional men have become dissatisfied with the decent competence arising from their professional labours, and rushed into the vortex of speculation. Christians have forgotten, if they ever learned, those lessons of moderation and contentment, which are so fully inculcated by the word and grace of God, and, identifying themselves with the lovers of the present world, have spread every sail, to catch every breath of this contaminated air, if it only promised to make them suddenly rich. Even the sacred ministry of the blessed Jesus, whose disciple no man can be without denying himself, have been drawn into this whirlpool, and already stand as beacon-lights, to warn their brethren of the dangers of this coast, already thickly strewn with wrecks. Our children, in the greenness of their youth and inexperience, are learning the lesson so effectually, as to grudge the time spent in receiving their education, because it detains them from the embraces of mammon.

In hearts thus occupied and exercised, it is manifest there can be little room for the love of God and better things; and if the good seed should, perchance, take root and vegetate, it will produce a feeble, sickly plant, because overshadowed by this deadly tree. What else do the Scriptures teach: "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through, and steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." "They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which while some men coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things."

Many unhappy consequences flow from the love and eager pursuits of the world. God is very unapt to be kept in the thoughts and hearts of such men. They rarely make suitable returns of love and gratitude to God for the rich gifts of his providence. They seldom use a due proportion of them to promote his

glory, or the good of their fellow creatures. They often lose that deep sense of dependence which should characterize creatures who “live, move, and have their being” in God. They are in great danger of growing proud and self-sufficient, leaning to their own understandings, and ascribing their success to their own skill. They seldom retain or exercise the love of God and spiritual things—wearying out their minds, and hearts, and lives, with the love and pursuit of the world. They have neither time, nor heart, to seek and enjoy God and his grace. What they have gained, as they think, by their own skill and industry, they feel at liberty to expend for their own gratification, in pampering “The lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.” All these, in a greater or less degree, and with various circumstantial modifications, are the natural results of the love and pursuit of riches—a passion, by the inordinate exercise of which, our age and country are so strikingly distinguished, and which God has so signally rebuked, by the course of his providence.

I say, “God has so signally rebuked us,” for neither truth nor duty will permit us to lose sight of Him while looking at second causes—for he is *The Cause* of all causes. Hence it is written, “I form the light, and create dark-

ness: I make peace, and create evil: I, the Lord, do all these things." He sent us all that exuberant prosperity for which we had not the grace to be thankful, and which we did not use for his glory. Like Jeshurun, we "waxed fat, and kicked." Our well-spread table became a snare to us. And if it were true, that our rulers were never so deeply implicated in the reverses which we have suffered—if they were as unwise and bad as their worst enemies have represented them to be—yet have they been given to us of God, upon our own choice; we, being left to choose *them*, and *they* being left to pursue measures, by which God is punishing us for this great sin of which we have been guilty. The very stroke of God's hand, tells us of the nature of the sin for which he is visiting us, for he has laid his hand on the very idol which we have set up in his place. The extent of the visitation indicates, that the sin is a national one; and the weight of the stroke, that the sin is grievous. Covetousness is, in the Scriptures, declared to be, idolatry—and idolatry is that abominable thing which the soul of the Lord hates. He will no more give his glory to it, than he will give it to graven images.

Judge of the evil by the punishment. You account it no small evil to see the riches and

prosperity of such a land as this prostrated—to see so many hundreds of thousands, almost without employment, and struggling for a bare subsistence. Nor have the sufferings of those who have been ruined in their circumstances, nor of those who have been *expecting* to have the stroke fall upon them, been small. Think not lightly, then, of the sin which has caused it. This evil has not sprung from the dust. It is not a sin of yesterday. It had its birth in the first dawn of our prosperity, and has been growing with our growth, and strengthening with our strength. Nor will it be easily eradicated. It has felt the knife before, but the wound has not been healed. God has now cut down to the bone, but the sore still runs, and is in danger of becoming a gangrene, for the worshippers of mammon still stand by the side of their fallen idols, bedew his image with their tears, and long for the time when they shall set it in its place, and repair its injuries, and gild its face afresh, and fall down and worship it.

Let us then endeavour to think of this evil which we are suffering as a divine infliction upon us for the ardour with which we have loved, and the eagerness with which we pursued the world.—It was said, as a matter of high praise, of the inhabitants of a sister city,



(New York,) when they suffered by that dreadful conflagration, in December, 1835, that their spirits were so unbroken by the visitation that within a very few days some were engaged in re-building, and others advertising their goods, as if nothing had happened. To me, in common with many others, the language and conduct appeared but little less than heaven-daring and impious. It may serve to show that the heart is not touched; but whether the heart should not feel such a pressing, and bow very low before God under it, is quite another question. My hearers, the hand of God was in that conflagration, and the hand of God is in the losses and sufferings which the American people have experienced. And shall they not both feel and acknowledge? The calamity may be removed, for aught I know, although we may feel and act like stoics or brutes under it. But sure I am it will never be sanctified. Hear God's words on this point—"I will go and return unto my place till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face."—"Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness, unto them which are *exercised* thereby."—Want of feeling under such a calamity as that which we have suffered, should be as deeply

deplored as the calamity itself. Then God might say of us as he said of ancient Israel: "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more."

Let us then acknowledge the divine hand in our sufferings, as inflicting chastisement upon us for our sins; and let us humble ourselves under his mighty hand. This, however, we shall scarcely do till we think more of God, and less of man in connexion with this sign of the times. In this we shall be greatly assisted by turning our eyes inward, and examining our own hearts on the subject. Are we personally innocent concerning this thing? Have we never bowed before this idol? Is there ne'er a wedge of gold, or Babylonish garment hidden in our tent? Have we not coveted increasing wealth, and desired rapid accumulation? Have we not been pained even to anger, at the interruption and reverses which we have experienced? Then our calamities have not been sanctified, and we are not prepared for their removal. If the Lord should remove the pressure of his hand, we should go on as we did before. And this, I fear, is the case with the great body of the American people. They seem to me to consider themselves as more sinned against than sinning—as having been brought into their present state by the blunders

and sins of their fellow creatures—as if the retributive providence of God had but little to do with it—and as if they were ready to spring forward with fresh alacrity and delight in the same career, the moment the Lord should take off the restraints by which he is now holding them in check. If such should be the case, we shall soon prepare ourselves for a new and sorer visitation, unless it should be prevented by a copious effusion of the Holy Spirit.

Our present state may, with great propriety, be considered as critical, if this were the only portentous sign of the times, which is by no means the case. There is a number of other dark shades in the aspects of the divine providence towards us, to which your attention, the Lord permitting, will hereafter be called. It seems as if the dark cloud which we have this evening been contemplating, is beginning to break—as if the pressure of the Lord's hand upon this part of our affairs, would soon be lightened. But it also appears as if the visitation had not been felt, to any great extent, as a divine and deserved affliction, humbling us under the Lord's mighty hand, and causing us to be afraid of being led into the same temptation again. O, could we but reach the Church of God, the stewards of his house, the people bought with the blood of the Lamb, with this subject at this critical period, and sound in their

ears the voice of warning and remonstrance, "Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it." "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."—"Go thy way, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee."—"Come out from among them, and be ye separate."—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."—"Consider the lillies of the field, how they grow: they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these—Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith."—"Be careful for nothing: but in every thing, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ."

These are some of the appropriate and seasonable teachings of the Holy Spirit, from which the Church and people of God may learn their duty at such a time as this. Receiving these instructions, and guiding themselves by these lights, they will be enabled to possess their souls in patience, enjoy a sweet

and holy serenity of mind in the darkest seasons, have the Lord's dealings sanctified to their good, take cheerfully the spoiling of their goods, and edify, by their example, all who behold them.

Let us all study, with prayerful attention, this sign of the times upon which we have fallen, that we may learn from it the Lord's designs, and our own duty. These lessons at least, among many others, appear to be clearly taught:—That God exercises a controlling influence over the affairs of men; that he is the moral Governor of the nation, as well as the individuals composing the human family; that he sometimes, at least, marks the crime by the punishment which he inflicts, so as to make the connexion between them manifest; that we cannot rely upon any earthly good for comfort and safety; that the love and pursuit of every object which fills the heart, and occupies the life, to the neglect of God and the concerns of the soul, are sinful, displeasing to God, and dangerous to us; that the highest degree of worldly prosperity does not prove the favour of God, or the good estate of men; that, notwithstanding the many blessings which we, as a nation, enjoy, there are plain proofs, in the providence of God, that he is visiting us for a sin which is peculiarly hateful to him—the inordinate love of riches; and, that our interest and duty are

equally concerned in immediate repentance for this crying national sin, and a thorough reformation of our manners with respect to it, if we would improve the existing crisis in our affairs, and escape the judgments which are hanging over us.

I now leave this weighty concern for the prayerful consideration of my hearers, under a deep conviction of its intrinsic importance, and their individual interest in it. No Christian *can* think lightly of it, and no sinner *should*. May the Spirit pour it upon our minds with divine light, and give it, in our hearts, an interest equal to its importance!

There are still other aspects of the providence of God towards our beloved country, which it nearly concerns us to understand, and which may be studied with interest and profit. If it shall please the Lord to spare us to the commencement of another month, and afford the necessary aid, some of these will be presented for consideration. In the mean time, "May the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ: to whom be glory for ever and ever."

## LECTURE V.

### REVIVALS OF RELIGION.

MATTHEW XVI. III.

CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

THE fourth sign of the times, to which your attention was directed, was, "The aspect of Divine Providence with respect to the monied concerns of our country." I endeavoured to show, that the dealings of God towards us had been very benign and gracious, in assigning us so extensive and fruitful a country; in the time of its settlement; the state and character of its first settlers; the time, and results, of our revolutionary struggle; the time when our institutions, civil and religious, were settled; the peculiar character of those institutions; the state of Europe as connected with the French Revolution; the influence of this state upon the business and wealth of our country, in connexion with its agriculture, commerce, and manufactures; the long and unhallowed career of our prosperity, manifested by the widely extended settlement and improvement of the

country, the facilities for intercommunication, and the amazing increase of wealth; the effect of all these upon the people, with respect to industry, enterprise, and the desire of rapid accumulation; the sudden and unexpected reverse which succeeded; the agency of God in it, and the probable reason for it; together, with some of the lessons of practical wisdom, which we may, and *should* derive from it. This, it is thought, is one of the signs which God is hanging out from his high heavens, to be observed, and studied, and improved, by the inhabitants of this land, for their good—one of the voices by which he reproveth us for a crying national sin. The next sign of the times, and to which I propose to call your attention this evening, is of more immediate concern to the people of God, because it bears more directly upon the welfare of his Church, which must be dearer to every real Christian than the apple of his eye. Whatever concerns her, concerns him also. “If I forget thee, let my right hand forget her cunning.” Our subject is, “Revivals of religion.”

V. *This will now be considered as the fifth sign of the times in which we live; and certainly not the least remarkable or important of them.*

Strictly speaking, “a revival of religion” is, an increasing feeling and interest experienced



by Christians for the glory of God, and the good of souls, manifesting itself by increased diligence and zeal in the divine service; stronger efforts after growth in grace and knowledge, connected with a keen relish for divine things, so as to take greater pleasure in *them* than in all things else. In the ordinary acceptation of the terms, however, we include in it one of its almost invariable fruits or concomitants—its effects on sinners. When the people of God walk together in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, it rarely happens that their number, as well as graces, are not increased. (See *Acts ix. 31.*) Hence, whenever Christians are warmed and animated in the service of God, it rarely happens, that sinners are not converted. When we speak of a revival, in this more general sense, we include in it, the conviction and conversion of sinners in greater numbers than is common under ordinary circumstances. Perhaps the best term we can use, to express the whole subject, is, “a revival of God’s work,” as that will include the whole work, as, both saints and sinners are affected by it. Nor do I know what reasonable objection can be made to its use in this sense. At all events, this is the sense in which the phrase, “Re-

vival of religion," is now generally understood.

The present has been called, "The age of revivals," and there is a sense in which it has been rightly so denominated. Perhaps there never has been an age, when revivals have been more numerous and extensive than within the memory of those now living. If, however, we should infer, that extensive and glorious revivals have not occurred in other ages than the present, and in other countries than our own, we should be egregiously mistaken. And yet, language is frequently used on the subject which would lead to such mistakes.

The fact is, there have been few periods of much extent in which the Church of God has not enjoyed seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. I do not except Old Testament times. To such a season, I suppose, the sacred writer alludes, when, in speaking of the birth of Enos in the fifth chapter of Genesis, he says, "Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord." This seems to me to indicate some increased attention to the ordinances of religion, connected with uncommon interest and feeling. Nor is there reason to doubt that a divine blessing attended the closing instructions with which Moses devolved the government of Israel upon Joshua shortly

before his death, the good effects of which accompanied that man of God through his whole administration. This is probably the reason why we hear nothing of their murmurings and rebellions while engaged in driving out the nations of Canaan, and taking possession of the land which God had given them for an inheritance. It also appears highly probable that the solemnities with which Joshua closed his ministry and life were attended with a blessing, the happy influence of which was long felt. The proof is found in this record in the second chapter of the book of Judges—"And the people served the Lord all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the Elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the Lord, that he did for Israel. And there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord." The extremes of these periods is about fifty years. The revivals were general, embracing the nation; their influence was felt for half a century, and many thousands, it may be hundreds of thousands, experienced the benefits of them.

Many other instances occur in the book of Judges. The children of Israel are represented as having been frequently delivered into the

hands of their enemies, because "they did evil in the sight of the Lord." And then we have such records as these—"And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them. And the land had rest." These brief records indicate seasons of great humiliation, fervent prayer, reformation of manners, and a return of the divine favour. And what are all these, under the circumstances of the case, but a revival of religion, more or less pure and extensive? You may read an account of similar seasons in the history of Hezekiah, Manasseh, and Josiah, kings of Judah, in the thirty-second, thirty-third, and thirty-fourth chapter of second Chronicles.

Nor has the Church been destitute of seasons of revival during the Christian dispensation from the beginning. What name shall we give to what occurred at Jerusalem on the Pentecost, when three thousand were converted to God in one day? What must have occurred intermediately, when we are told soon after that the number of them that believed was five thousand? Was it not a revival of religion which caused Peter and John to pay that visit to Samaria, of which we have an account in the eighth chapter of Acts? To what state of religion does the record in the ninth chapter of

the Acts refer? "Then had the churches rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified; and, walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Was it any thing but pure, blessed, and glorious revivals of religion which planted large and flourishing churches at Rome, Antioch, Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Smyrna, Pergamos, Laodicea, Thyatira, Philadelphia, and a large number of other places in every part of the Roman Empire, long before the close of the first century?

I will not refer you to the uncertain records of the dark ages, for further examples, although much might be gleaned even from this comparatively barren field. But to come down to the sixteenth century, the period of the Reformation. At the commencement of that period, the great body of the Christian Church lay fast asleep in the arms of Roman Catholicism. Its characteristics were, ignorance, superstition, idolatry, and profligacy. A religious influence, as extensive and salutary, had not been experienced since the first century, as that which occurred in the sixteenth. The fruit of it was the emancipation of England, Scotland, the seven united provinces of the Netherlands, one half of Switzerland, Saxony, and other considerable portions of Germany. While no-

thing but the strong arm of secular power, and a spirit of persecution, which rioted in blood, arrested the progress of the Reformation in France, Spain, and Italy, and kept such large portions of Europe under Papal domination. The aggregate of all this was denominated, "The Reformation." The detail might with propriety be called, "Revivals of religion in some scores of thousands of congregations." The present century, loud as its boastings are, furnishes no parallel.

But perhaps it may be supposed that no revivals occurred from the Reformation till the commencement of the period which we have so complacently called, "The age of revivals." Nor is this correct. The former part of the seventeenth century witnessed remarkable outpourings of the Holy Spirit, both in Scotland and Ireland, which have not been exceeded since the day of Pentecost. For instance—a single sermon preached in the Church yard of Shotts, in Scotland, on Monday the 21st day of June, 1630, by John Livingston, the lineal ancestor of the numerous and respectable family of that name in this country, was blessed to the conversion of five hundred souls. Another sermon of his, preached on a similar occasion at Holywood, in Ireland, God was pleased to own to the conversion of a thousand souls.

We have no reason to believe that these were insulated seasons in either of those countries. Nor was England during the seventeenth century, the age of Baxter, Owen, Howe, Bates, and a host of other worthies, without its seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. Take Kidderminster, the parish of Richard Baxter, as an example. When he came to the place, he says, there was about one family in a street that worshipped God, and called on his name—and before he left, instances of neglect were very rare. Of six hundred communicants, he stood in doubt of only about a dozen. Perhaps the ministry of no pastor was more blessed in a given place. And this was the case with many of his cotemporaries, although they lived in exceedingly troublous times.

It was my wish and design, at this point, to have taken a brief view of the state of religion in England and this country during a part of the last century. But time will not permit. Sometime before the middle of that period God had gathered together, at the University of Oxford, in England, a company of young men of fervent piety who were associated for mutual improvement in the things of religion. Of this number were John and Charles Wesley, and George Whitefield, subsequently well known, both in Europe and America, as the friends and

promoters of vital godliness; one of them the founder of that numerous and respectable sect, called Methodists, and another honoured of God as the instrument employed to diffuse a new spirit into existing denominations. Extensive revivals of religion followed their labours on both sides of the Atlantic. In this country Whitefield met a hearty co-operation in the Tennants and others in the Presbyterian Church, and Edwards, and many others of the fathers of New England—and a glorious scene of revival ensued, which pervaded almost every part of our land. It was, however, greatly marred by the errors and excesses of Davenport and others, whose mistakes and follies made the very name of a revival odious for many years. The influences of the Spirit were consequently withdrawn for many years, so that we scarcely hear of a revival again till after the revolutionary war. Of what then occurred I shall hereafter speak. Enough has, I think, been said to show that revivals are not as great novelties as some have believed and others imagined. So that if it be admitted that it is proper to call the present, especially with reference to our own country, “The age of revivals,” it is necessary that we do so with some limitations and explanations, or we shall be apt to leave a wrong impression on the



mind. From what has taken place in this age and country, we have no right to disparage what God has done in other ages and countries. To do this would be very like blaspheming the Holy Ghost.

To come, then, to modern times. It is a fact, that, not long after the revolutionary war, revivals began to occur again; and, towards the close of the last century, and the beginning of the present, they were more frequent than they had been for a long time before. In many instances, they were deep, powerful, and extensive, and their effects were permanently good. They were, generally, connected with plain, pungent, and affectionate exhibitions of the whole counsel of God, followed by deep convictions of sin, of heart and nature, as well as life, and a believing reception and appropriation of Christ, as "made to us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," through the renewing and sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. The effect, ordinarily, was, great self-abasement, humiliation, and perseverance in holy living. The churches had peace, and their members walked together in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost. Defections were few, and the exercise of discipline was seldom necessary. Novelties, in faith or practice, rarely occurred.

There were, however, some few exceptions. In some parts of this State, in some of the Western States, and, in a few instances, elsewhere, singular cases of bodily-exercise occurred; first, probably, in the case of persons of feeble or diseased nerves, and afterwards communicated to others by sympathy. This was of evil influence. Then followed a seeming want of more labourers in the vineyard, which gave rise to the introduction of imperfectly educated and unqualified men into the ministry, with which, was probably connected departures from sound doctrine. From this sprung the Cumberland Presbyterians, who, for several years, troubled the Presbyterian Church. But, notwithstanding these drawbacks, the work went on, and great good was done.

'Till about the year 1820, few changes took place, excepting the introduction of what has been called, "The anxious-seats," and the employment of a few evangelists. The anxious-seat was originally used, to save the pastor the labour of calling upon the many who were exercised; and the employment of evangelists was designed to assist the pastors, who were borne down with the multiplicity of their arduous labours. About this time, commenced what has been called, "The conference of the churches." This practice obtained princi-

pally in New England, and consisted in the appointment of a few influential and gifted laymen, to visit neighbouring churches, calling the people together, and spending a day or two with them in exhortation and prayer, labouring to reconcile existing difficulties, and calling upon churches to make public confession of their sins, and covenant anew to serve the Lord. From these exercises pastors were so far excluded as not to be expected to take an active part in them, even in their own churches. This was the first serious inroad made on the character and influence of the pastoral office.

The influence of this *new measure* was, in the first instance, very considerable, and, perhaps, some good was accomplished. But, like all merely human devices, it ceased to have much effect when its novelty was worn off. When this was perceived to be the case, it was abandoned. About the same time, a distinction began to be made between ministers, as favourable or unfavourable to revivals. If the name of a minister was not known to one of the parties, the question would be immediately asked, "Is he a revival-man?" And the meaning would be, not, is he a godly man, who loves God, and the souls of men, and labours diligently for the promotion of the divine

glory, and the salvation of souls, but, does he approve of the newest measures, and work according to the newest rules? If not, though he were pouring his whole heart into his work, and God were blessing his labours in the most abundant manner, he would not be recognised as, "a revival-man," but, stigmatized as, "cold-hearted, and inefficient." I have, myself, heard them so called, again and again.

When the conference of the churches had served its turn, it was succeeded by what has been technically called, "protracted meetings." Such meetings have been extensively held throughout our land, and, especially, in the Presbyterian Church. I think, they did not become general till about the year 1827, or '28. Previously to this period, if an interesting state of religious feeling existed in an extensive congregation, meetings were necessarily increased; and, if the pastor were unable to bear the increased labour, neighbouring brethren were called in to assist him. This, however, is not what is meant by "protracted meetings." These are meetings, which have been appointed frequently, if not generally, when religion appeared to be in a low or declining state, with a view to wake up Christians, and excite the attention of sinners, to the subject of their salvation; or, as it has been expressed, "To

get up a revival." They have generally been conducted by evangelists, or, by a number of ministers, called from greater or less distances, who were supposed to be peculiarly skilful in conducting such operations, or whose ministrations were calculated to produce the most striking effects: in other words, "revival-men." Other men, whatever their gifts or qualifications might be, would rarely be invited.

These meetings have lasted, from three to four days. Pastors have, generally, taken very little part in the exercises in their own congregations, and had very little to do with the direction of affairs. The exercises have consisted, of one or two sermons a day, with one or two meetings for exhortation and prayer; and, when the state of feeling would warrant it, the anxious-seat. The object of this seat is, to bring those whose minds are affected to give a public indication of their purpose to become religious, and then, by exhortation and prayer, to bring them to "submit," as it is called, in which, it is supposed, their conversion consists. The character of the preaching on these occasions has, generally, been of an exciting kind: sometimes, by holding up some important truth before the mind in a striking light, till it has absorbed the attention, and excited the imagination, and prepared the subject

sternly to adopt the preacher's desire, by forming the resolution to submit to God, supposing that the great work is then done, although they have never been convinced of the evil of sin, or felt the plagues of their own hearts, or their need of being "Washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," or, having had a single view of Christ, as crucified and slain for their redemption. Sometimes, strong appeals have been made to the passions; and sometimes, they have been urged on to the duty of submission, in connexion with their ability to perform it, till it has been supposed to be one of the easiest things imaginable; and, sometimes, the preacher has assumed the divine omniscience, and declared, authoritatively, that unless the hearer should submit to God before he should leave his seat, he would lose his soul. The speaker has witnessed such things.

Generally speaking, very little gospel instruction has been given at such meetings, and the distinguishing doctrines of the Christian system have been studiously kept out of view, as not calculated to promote the work. For instance: You would hear very little, if any thing, of our sinful condition by nature; the nature and necessity of regeneration, by the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit; the

doings and sufferings of Christ; justification by faith, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, as the ground of our acceptance with God; the nature of the divine law and government; the importance of self-examination; the evidences of a gracious state, and, the nature and character of the Christian life. These subjects have often been laughed at, as antiquated follies, or avoided, as injurious to revivals of religion.

I do not mean, that this has been the case at all protracted meetings. Many of them have been conducted with propriety; and the truth, as it is in Jesus, has been preached at them. But the other course, with various modifications, has had a considerably wide circulation. In many instances, such measures, and preaching, have been forced upon congregations, and suffered against the better judgment and wishes of pastors, and, perhaps, a large portion of their congregations, through the influence of a few fanatical spirits, in the hope of being able to control the course of events, gratify these spirits, and yet save the Church from material injury. This, however, has rarely been the case. Time, however, does not permit me to dwell on this part of the subject. I proceed to inquire as to results.

What effects, then, have resulted from these

things? It is undeniable, that these have been neither few nor small, and, if we had an accurate and detailed account of them, it would furnish an interesting and useful study to the philosopher and the Christian, and, especially, the Christian minister. It might, for instance, be expected, that where such long-extended and mighty efforts had been made; such important and exciting topics had been discussed, and enforced with so much talent, skill, zeal, frequency and perseverance, that the hearers have had such a direct, acknowledged, and deep interest in them—and that scenes of thrilling interest have frequently been exhibited, which were calculated to call into exercise the deepest sympathies of our nature, that many and important results would flow from them. Such, accordingly, has been the fact. Thousands and tens of thousands of souls, in various parts of our land, have been deeply and seriously affected by them. Nor have I a doubt, that many have been happily and savingly affected by them. But, whether enough of good, has been done to compensate for a train of evils, many of which have grown spontaneously, and almost necessarily, out of the measures which have been pursued; and, whether the good might not have been obtained, and most of the evils have been avoided, by a different course, are questions



which are worthy of grave and serious consideration. At all events, it is very certain, that these measures, like all mere human inventions, have been producing, constantly, less and less effect, and have laid them under the necessity of inventing others, or, of falling back upon those which God has appointed and approved. What then, you ask, are the evils to which I allude?

They have been of evil influence, with respect to the stated and ordinary ministrations of the Gospel; an ordinance, which God has appointed, in perpetuity, for the edification of the body of Christ, and the conviction and conversion of sinners. After a protracted meeting, of the most approved stamp, the ordinary ministrations of the sanctuary have, for a length of time, had very little, if any effect, either on saint or sinner. The agitated waters subside into a dead calm. The people of God sink down into a dull, cold apathy, as if it were not their duty to feel or act; and sinners, would seem to think it almost a sin to be converted at such a time. They sit down, and fold their hands to sleep, as if they had no souls to save or lose, till one of these seasons of extra effort and excitement returns. From this it has resulted, that few have been received into the churches, excepting at such pe-

riods. It has been, either a feast or a famine. Daily bread has been loathed and despised, as well nigh useless. Even those churches which have cordially disapproved of the whole course of things, have been deeply affected by it. In many of the Presbyterian churches, the period for the return of the paroxysm has been, when the season for the annual meeting of the General Assembly has been drawing near. When it has been perceived, upon review, that little has been accomplished since its last meeting, and that, a meager account must be given, if something be not immediately done; the protracted meeting is called; notice is given, as extensively as possible; preparation is made; the *proper coadjutors* are procured; expectation is raised; the work is commenced; in the course of a week or two, fifty or a hundred are gathered into the Church; the thing is gazetted throughout the land; a report is made, in due form, to the General Assembly: a great calm ensues, so that the lecture-room and prayer meeting are forsaken, and it would require an earthquake to wake the Church up again before the usual time. Do not many of you know this to be, substantially, correct? Why, even our sober brethren of the Episcopal Church, have felt the effect, and complain, that their accessions to the Church are principally

confined to the season of Lent, during which they have almost daily public exercises. There must be something wrong, when God's institutions are thus undervalued and powerless, and, when we substitute, what, in the very nature of the case, must be special, for God's stated appointment, and rely upon our own inventions, instead of his ordinances.

But this is not all. This state of things has been of most pernicious influence with respect to the pastoral office. This is an office of divine institution, and designed by the great Head of the Church to be perpetual. In the settled state of the Church, the whole work of the ministry, both as it respects ingathering and edification, has been committed by Christ to the pastor. But in the state of things of which I am speaking, the pastor has been made a mere cypher, on the wrong side of unity. In these protracted meetings, the whole work is thrown into the hands of the Evangelist, or the brethren who are called in, as the case may be. The pastor may indeed be *seen*, but he is not *heard or felt*. These men come prepared with a few sermons calculated to produce an immediate effect, such as no pastor can stately prepare for his people, and which he should not preach in continuance if he could, for they would starve their souls;

and when the excitement begins to subside, as subside it will, these men retire, and leave all the difficulties and trials of the re-action to him. Well, what are the consequences? Why, he cannot revive the dying excitement. He cannot minister satisfactorily to the vitiated tastes, and morbid sensibilities of his hearers. He has lost the little influence which he once exercised. He grows discouraged with the hopelessness of future usefulness, and desires to fly from the scene. And if *he* did not, his *hearers* desire his removal. They lay every difficulty at *his* door. They suppose if they had one of those men that had laboured among them with so much interest and success, they would have a revival all the time. And the next you hear, he is gone. This evil influence has well nigh destroyed the pastoral office, with all its hallowed influences, in some parts of the Church, and weakened it everywhere. And if it is suffered to go on, it will make revivals a by-word and a loathing, and go far to destroy the Church itself. Surely these things ought not to be. Surely, those who love and pray for the peace and prosperity of Zion, should wake up, and see to it. If any one desires to be informed on the subject, let him examine the statistics of our Church, and he will be equally astonished and

grieved to find what a multitude of her ministry are either without charges, or acting as stated supplies. I have myself known a Presbytery consisting of nineteen ministers, only three of whom were pastors. No small portion of this evil has arisen from the employment of Evangelists, protracted meetings, and the character of modern revivals. A genuine revival of religion has always served to unite the pastor, if he were a good man, more closely to his people, and greatly to increase his usefulness. The revivals of later years have had a directly contrary effect. Verily there is something utterly wrong in all this.

This state of things has had a great and unhappy effect on the character of gospel ministrations. It seems to be at war with almost all the distinguishing doctrines of our holy religion. These *may not* be preached in connexion with revivals, because they are supposed to have a bad influence on them. During such seasons it would be treason to speak of original sin, the atonement as the only ground of our hope of acceptance with God, justification by faith, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, the necessity of regeneration by the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit, or any thing else which distinguishes the gospel from all other systems; for

fear that men should forget their accountability, or be unwilling to exert themselves, unless they possessed every kind of ability necessary to save their own souls. The consequence of all this has been, that men have imbibed a distaste for doctrinal preaching, and ultimately for the doctrines themselves, so as to become unwilling to hear them at all, or even to believe them. They have reasoned on this wise—"If these doctrines are inimical to revivals, they cannot be very important, even if true, and probably are not true in the sense we have heretofore supposed." If the first proposition be true, the argument is sound, and the conclusion irresistible. This, I have no doubt, is one of the fruitful sources of those errors with which the Presbyterian Church has been flooded, distracted, and well nigh ruined. The devil has no better time to sow his tares by handfulls than when the watchmen are absorbed in revivals; and he knows it well—and if he can get them to do his work, he is all the better pleased. It does, however, seem strange to me how it ever entered into the minds of men, that the doctrines of the Scriptures should be opposed to the best interests of the kingdom of Christ. Either the Holy Spirit has committed a strange mistake on the subject, or men must be essentially wrong about this thing. It would be

wonderful if those truths which lie at the foundation of the whole system, should be injurious to its interests, and be unnecessary to be known and understood by us!

These revivals have had an unhappy influence on the state of religion and the welfare of souls, as connected with *hasty admission* to the communion of the Church. This practice has been very general. Communion seasons have immediately succeeded protracted meetings. I have known an instance where, during the last ten days of a meeting of five weeks continuance, three communion seasons were held, two hundred and ten were admitted to the Church—in four months the pastor was dismissed, and within eighteen months their house of worship was sold, and the Church itself was broken up. If one hundred of its three hundred members can now be found decently professing godliness, I am utterly mistaken. These hasty admissions afford the subjects no time to test the nature of their exercises, or to examine the state of their hearts; and it is no wonder if the churches get filled with unsound members, or if they fall off like leaves in autumn. The reasons assigned for such admissions is, they will lose their impressions, and never make a profession. This may be very true. But what a commentary is it on the na-

ture of the revival, and indeed on the whole system? If the work were genuine there would be no danger in waiting. The bread cast upon the waters would be found again after many days. If the Church were not immortal under its Head, the errors, and follies, and wickedness of men would have destroyed it long ago.

Finally. The Christian character, formed by such means, even where a real conversion takes place, is so defective, as to make the measures themselves of questionable propriety. I will only notice a very few. They have been found, in uncommon numbers, destitute of that meekness, gentleness, and humility, which so strikingly characterized the blessed Saviour, and which are so becoming and lovely in young converts. These, on the contrary, appear to have been born of full age and growth, and to speak with as much confidence of Christian duty and experience as if they had been thoroughly trained and disciplined in the divine life; and, to rush into the Christian warfare with as much boldness, as if they had proved their armour, and gained many an easy victory; and, to reprove veterans of the cross, of forty years standing, as cold, idle, and inefficient, as if they, themselves, had a commission from Heaven to exercise such authority over God's



heritage. They are frequently found impatient of restraint, and unwilling to submit to the authority necessary to make God's house a house of order. And with all these, there is often connected, not only a lamentable ignorance of the doctrines of the Gospel, but a great distaste for, and disbelief of them, by which, a continued ignorance of them is insured in all time to come. Men will never study, with interest and success, those subjects to which they have an aversion. Such a state of things can never exist without great loss to the soul, for the character is formed by the knowledge and influence of the doctrines of religion on the heart. These constitute the bones and muscles of the new creature. And, where the knowledge and love of the doctrines is absent, an imperfect character will be induced, which will lack some of the most important and lovely traits which adorn the Christian when the conformation of the new man is fully developed. Hence, many of those, of whom I am speaking, are deficient in that symmetry which is so lovely in the well-formed Christian. While these are particularly defective, with respect to the meekness, gentleness, and humility, by which the Saviour was so delightfully distinguished, they are no less deficient in that firmness, which makes its pos-

essor “steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” For the want of this, so many of the present day are, “ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth,” and are so blown about by every wind of doctrine, that you can never know whither the next breeze may carry them, or upon what desolate coast they may make shipwreck of their faith, and their souls. Need we, then, wonder at the prevalence and influence of error?

These are some of the reasons, why we object to the inventions of men in conducting the work of the Lord, and why we earnestly desire to see the Church return to the good old ways. God has never denied his blessing to his own truth, and the labour of his own servants, who have received the Word at his mouth, and relied upon the influence of his Spirit to give it effect. Nor will he now. “Wait on the Lord, and he will bring it to pass.” The Church will then soon cease to be like a forest, through which a devouring fire has passed, consuming every thing which had life in it; and become again, “Fruitful as Lebanon, beautiful as Tirezah, comely as Jerusalem, and terrible as an army with banners.” May the Lord hasten it in its season!

## LECTURE VI.

### CORRUPTION OF DOCTRINE.

MATTHEW XVI. III.

CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

THE last particular, to which your attention was directed, was, "Revivals of religion." After explaining their nature and importance, it was observed, that they were not novelties in the history of God's Church, having been experienced in almost every age and country where the Church has had a visible form, both under the Old and New Testament dispensations. A number of facts were detailed, and remarks made, with respect to the great revival, which commenced a little before the middle of the last century, and in which, Whitefield and the Wesleys were prominent actors; and the reason assigned, why that glorious work was brought suddenly and unexpectedly to a close, shortly before the Revolutionary war.

We then passed on to a brief review of the revivals which occurred after that period, to-

wards the close of the last century, and the commencement of the present, up to about the year 1820, during which time, revivals, with comparatively few exceptions, continued to be pure and salutary. Then, began the employment of evangelists, out of which grew protracted meetings, anxious-seats, new tests of conversion, together with speedy and premature admissions to the Church. It has also appeared, that, if much good resulted from such a course of measures, that much and great, if not necessary evil, has followed in their train; such as, scanty and imperfect exhibitions of truth; a distaste for the ordinary ministrations of the Gospel; a lack of edification under them; long seasons of coldness and inactivity; the destruction of the influence which the pastor should exercise; the frequent disruptions of the pastoral relation; a distaste for the doctrines of the Gospel, often followed by their abandonment or corruption; and, that the characters thus formed, are lamentably defective, lacking many of the characteristics which should distinguish the child of God; and particularly deficient in the meekness, gentleness, and lowliness, which were so beautifully exemplified in the Master, and which are so eminently lovely in the young convert, nor less deficient in that firmness, which is "steadfast, un-

movable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." And, finally, it was shown, that these defective characteristics, which have distinguished revivals within the last twenty years, are not necessary to them, and ought to be avoided. If, from that discussion, the impression has been produced, in any mind, that the speaker is unfriendly to revivals of religion, and that he does not ardently desire to see their prevalence—to witness them in his own charge, where a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord is so much needed—and enjoy them in his own soul, he begs, that such impression may be at once dismissed. If these were not his views and feelings, he would be both ungrateful and traitorous to his gracious Lord. He has not forgotten, nor can he ever forget, the blessed seasons he has witnessed and enjoyed in another part of the vineyard, in days, the recollection of which will always be pleasant. Nor does he live without the hope, that, ere the Master will call him to lay his hoary head on its last pillow, he will give him to see, and enjoy with this flock, a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, which will make this hill of Zion beautiful as Tirzah, and fruitful as Eden. Nor does he look forward to it as at a great distance. "Brethren, pray for us, that the word

of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified." This train of thought, the Lord willing, will be pursued on some other occasion. At present, and as connected with the

VI. Sign of the times in which we live, I will direct your attention to several things in the state of the Church which very seriously affect her welfare.

1. *The first particular which I deem it of importance to call up in this connexion, is the corruption of the doctrines of our holy religion.*

Doctrines are the fundamental principles or positions of any sect or master, by which their systems or instructions are distinguished. The doctrines of the Bible are the first principles, or the fundamental truths, of the religion which the Bible teaches. They must, therefore lie at the foundation of the system which the Bible inculcates. They make the Christian religion to be what it is. They distinguish it from all others. If therefore, you abstract the doctrines, you lose the system. It is no longer the religion of Christ. It is something else. "The Scriptures, (says one,) present us with a copious fund of Evangelical truth, which, though it has not *the form* of a regular system, yet its parts are such, that, when united, make the most complete body of doctrine that we can possibly have." If it be true that the doc-

trines of a system make it to be what it is, as for instance, the doctrines of the Bible make up the system of its religion, then must the doctrines be of essential importance. No man can be said to understand the religion of Christ any further than he understands the doctrines or truths of which it is composed, and which make it to be what it is. If this position be correct, then it is reasonably to be inferred, that God has made such a revelation of truth or doctrine in the Bible, as may serve to make a man wise unto salvation, and has made it intelligible, or so as to be understood by those who will bestow a proper degree of attention upon it. That this supposition is a fact, is capable of being proved to a demonstration. Nor are the doctrines of the Bible, useless with respect to practice. For instance:—The doctrine of God's sovereignty is calculated to excite submission—his power and justice to promote fear—his holiness, humility, and purity—his goodness and grace to furnish a ground of hope—his love to excite joy—his faithfulness, confidence. In like manner we may derive some practical instruction from every doctrine of revelation.

Churches, in almost every age, have been in the practice of collecting these doctrines to-

gether in some systematic form or order, denominated "Confessions of Faith and Catechisms," either for the purpose of exhibiting their views of the doctrines of Scripture to the world, assisting their own minds in obtaining an orderly view of them in their various relations, or assisting the learner in obtaining a correct knowledge of them. These symbols of faith have been more or less elaborate and extensive, as the circumstances of the case have been thought to require, and have generally contained those doctrines which were supposed to be most important and vital to the Christian system. More of these formularies were formed during the progress of the Reformation than in any preceding period—and they were generally both more elaborate and precise. And this remarkable fact occurred with respect to them. They agreed with each other in relation to every doctrine which has been deemed vital to the Christian system. This may perhaps be best accounted for by the consideration that their framers came to the work with unsophisticated minds, recently illuminated and sanctified by the Spirit of all grace, and not contaminated by a worldly philosophy, and drew the materials with which they wrought fresh from the oracles of God. Our own Confession



of Faith and Catechisms, were of the number, and they will bear a fair comparison with the best of them.

It will be no news to inform you that they have had their full share of assault from without and from within. This has, perhaps, never been more strikingly the case than within the last twenty years. The most humiliating circumstance of all is, that the most violent assaults and the deepest wounds have been made by her sworn allies, or homeborn sons. These are signs of the times over which angels might weep. These assaults have not been made against the outworks, but against the very citadel of truth. The robbery has not been committed on "the mint, cummin, and anise" of the sanctuary; but on the "weightier matters of the law, truth, judgment, and righteousness," the essential doctrines of the gospel—those which distinguish the Christian system from all others, and makes it to be what it is.

Do you ask what are the essential doctrines of the gospel of the grace of God? The fall of our first parents, and the consequent depravity, guilt, misery, and helplessness, of themselves and all their natural posterity, the depravity being inherited, and the guilt imputed, by the just judgment of God, so that all are "by nature the children of wrath."

The proper and supreme Deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only begotten son of God. The covenant or engagement into which he entered as the surety of his people, to redeem them from the curse of the law, by bearing its penalty in their stead. His incarnation—his vicarious sufferings and death, by which he made an atonement, by which he satisfied the divine law and justice, and brought in an everlasting righteousness, so that God might be just in the justification of every one that believeth in him, he having “Borne *their* sins in his own body on the tree.” Justification by faith through the imputed righteousness of Christ alone, as the meritorious cause. Regeneration by the supernatural power of the Holy Ghost, the sinner being considered as “dead in trespasses and sins,” and he, as quickening him into life, slaying his enmity, and subduing his rebellion, not by moral suasion or motive presented, but by his own almighty energy, creating him anew in Christ Jesus. And finally, God’s electing love in choosing them in Christ Jesus unto salvation, before the foundation of the world, according to the good pleasure of his will, and not on account of any worthiness or good foreseen in them, but that they *might be* holy and without blame before him in love.

Now, every body knows, who knows any thing correctly about the matter, that these are doctrines of the Presbyterian Church—that they are fully and clearly set forth in her standards—that they have been publicly professed by every one of her ministers and elders, who has not been smuggled into office—that they should be taught in all her pulpits, Sabbath Schools, Bible and Catechetical classes—that we profess to believe that they are drawn immediately from the Bible, and that they are supported and corroborated by many clear and indubitable testimonies, drawn from the same source. Are these doctrines universally credited and maintained? They are the doctrines of the Reformation, and with very little variation, that they are found in all the standards which sprang immediately from the Reformation? In many instances they remain in the book, but have been banished from the pulpit. The candidate has subscribed them, but the priest's lips that should keep knowledge, deny, and speak against them. Alas, that it should be so! Is it not a dark sign that men should profess one system of doctrine, and believe, and teach another?

But how is it in our own beloved Zion? Have all her sons kept the faith? The following question must be answered in the affirmative by every minister and elder who is inducted

into office in an orderly manner—"Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Confession of Faith of this Church, as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?" This would seem to be sufficient to declare the sentiments, and bind the conscience of every honest man—and our ministry and eldership should, under such bonds, all be of one mind, if not of one heart. What are the facts of the case? There is scarcely a doctrine which I have mentioned, with the exception of the incarnation, which has not been denied, or frittered down, till scarcely one of its distinguishing features has been discernible.

The manner of effecting the object has been various. Sometimes a dead silence has been maintained with respect to every leading doctrine of the Christian system, because the people, it is alleged, do not like, or will not bear the preaching of the doctrines of the gospel—or because the preacher does not believe them to be of importance, or the preaching of them to be of injurious tendency—while at the same time the preacher inculcates, and the people hear, and bear doctrines of a contrary character. So that the objection lies not against doctrinal preaching, but against the preaching of the distinguishing doctrines of the gospel—for who can preach or instruct at all, and yet teach

*no doctrine.* What is doctrine, but the sentiment entertained concerning a subject. Another method of corrupting or destroying the truth or doctrines of the gospel, is, to profess to believe the doctrines, and hold them in the same sense with others, but to give contrary or discrepant views of them, and call them *the philosophy of those doctrines.* Our views of doctrine agree, say they; we differ only in their philosophy. What is the philosophy of a doctrine, but the particular view which a man entertains of it, or the amount of his belief concerning it? Thus, by a philosophy, false so called, is the truth undermined, and the faith of the Church subverted. They hang these apples of Sodom on the tree of life, ask us to eat them, as heavenly fruit, but they turn to ashes in the mouth. And the salve for the conscience is, that when they were supposed to receive the Confession of Faith as containing *the system of doctrines taught in the Holy Scriptures,* they meant it only, "For substance of doctrine." That is; they received it as a whole, that they might impugn or reject as much of it as they pleased in detail. Of this, the age in which we live has furnished proofs and illustrations enough to satisfy the most sceptical.

It has been said, that "original sin" is one of the essential doctrines of the Christian religion. It holds a prominent place in our Confession of Faith. It is thus defined: "They (our first parents) being the root of all mankind, the guilt of this sin (their first transgression) was imputed, and the same death in sin, and corrupted nature conveyed to all their posterity, descending from them by ordinary generation." This, some deny entirely. Others say, all men are not sinners by nature, any more than Adam was. They are only liable to sin, if they live to perform moral acts. Others say, they will certainly sin. And one of great notoriety, who, in words, acknowledges original sin, sums up his exposition of *Rom. v. 12*, by saying, "I understand it, therefore, as referring to the fact, that men sin in their own persons, in themselves—as, indeed, how can they sin in any other way? and that, therefore, they die;" evidently implying, that no man can be a sinner, nor, as such, die, till he has voluntarily committed some act of sin. How this consists with original sin, and the death of infants, it would be difficult to show. No doctrine of revelation has been more misconstrued, misrepresented, hated, and impugned. Errorists, of every name, have assailed it with every

weapon they have been able to bring to bear against it. And yet, it has been written in the oracles of God with the clearness of a sun-beam, and is attested by every death which has ever occurred on earth, as well as by the anguish of every father and mother who have buried an infant.

But this, is not the only important Christian doctrine which has been assailed. Our Saviour's proper and supreme deity has been assaulted in a variety of forms. While the thorough Unitarian has made him a mere man, and the Arian has allowed him an angelic or super-angelic existence before his incarnation, making him a kind of official God, the philosophical speculatist, anxious to solve every mystery in the deep things of God, and, unable to explain what is meant by the divine and eternal Sonship of Christ, has not only endeavoured to maintain his divinity by a crippled and enfeebled argument, but with wanton impiety called, what *he* could not comprehend, "an eternal absurdity," while his Socinian neighbour stood by, and exclaimed, "Well done, my brother;" and his humble followers, in the Presbyterian and other churches, echoed his folly, if not his impiety, and strengthened the hands of the enemies of this great and essential truth, "Jesus Christ is God over all."

Again:—The covenant of works, in which Adam is considered as the federal head and representative of all his natural posterity, in consequence of the violation of which they all inherit a depraved nature, and, by the just judgment of God, the guilt of that first sin (not the sin itself, or the act of sinning, as some ignorantly or wilfully misrepresent it, but the guilt of it,) is imputed to them, is a doctrine clearly taught in *our* standards, as well as those of other churches, and fully acknowledged by all our ministers and elders at their ordination. This is the language of our Confession of Faith. “The first covenant made with man was a covenant of works, wherein life was promised to Adam, and, in him, to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience.” All this, is denied, spoken against, and even ridiculed as an absurdity, by some; and by some, who have publicly received it as an article of their own faith, a part of that “system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures.” This, is the language of one, and the sentiment of many—printed in books, and taught from the pulpit. “Various attempts have been made to explain the introduction and propagation of sin in our world. The most common has been—that Adam was the representative of the race; that he was a



covenant head, and that sin was imputed to his posterity, and that they were held liable to punishment for it as if they had committed it themselves. But to this, there are great and insuperable objections: 1. There is not one word of it in the Bible. Neither the terms representative, covenant, or impute, are ever applied to the transaction in the sacred Scriptures. 2. It is a mere philosophical theory; an introduction of a speculation into theology, with an attempt to explain what the Bible has left unexplained." It is afterwards said, in the same connexion, "It compels us at once to ask the question, how can this be just?" All this *may possibly* be true. It may be good theology. It may be sound philosophy. It may even be scriptural. Although I do not believe it is either, but the germ of a heresy, if not itself a heresy—and so accounted in the standards of our Church. Whatever it may be to others, we are bound to esteem it a great error, leading to others. He who should call it the mother of Pelagianism, would not give it a wrong name. I wonder how a Presbyterian minister, holding the sentiment, must feel, upon a prayerful revision of his ordination professions and vows?

The atonement, a co-ordinate and essential doctrine of our holy religion, has fared no bet-

ter, in these days of speculation, restlessness, and "march of mind," than its correlates. The doctrine is thus defined in our Confession of Faith: "The Lord Jesus, by his perfect obedience and sacrifice of himself, which he, through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of his Father; and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto him." How has this doctrine been received? Vital as it is to the Christian system, it has been assailed from many quarters. The Unitarian, as you know, denies it altogether. Some have, in words as well as in fact, denied the vicarious nature of the death of Christ, alleging, that he died for sin in the abstract, which is making no atonement at all, and would be as available for the sins of devils as of men. Others have represented it as, "A satisfaction rendered to the *public justice* of God, giving him an occasion to express his displeasure against sin, and exercise his mercy in the forgiveness of sinners"—a very lame account of so important a matter, leaving the demands of the law, and the justification of the sinner, where it found them, and as unscriptural as lame. And others again, in order to get clear of the doctrine of imputation, to

which they have a mortal aversion in all its forms and bearings, although Christ “bore our sins in his own body on the tree,”—and God “hath laid on him the iniquity of us all,”—and he has “brought in an everlasting righteousness,”—“that we might be made the righteousness of God in him,” deny that he bore the “penalty of the law,” although that penalty was “death;” and he “died for us,” or in our stead, and “was made of a woman, and made under the law,” for that very purpose. To such wretched subterfuges will men resort to get rid of the truth, and ease their consciences of the pressure of their vows. These practices have been so general, that simple-hearted Christians have found it difficult to know what truth is, and to exclaim with tears, “They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.”

Justification by faith, which Luther called, “the article by which the Church stands or falls,” has been assailed with no less violence and bitterness. Satan and his emissaries have always had a peculiar hatred against it. The doctrine is thus defined in the Larger Catechism: “Justification is an act of God’s free grace unto sinners, in which he pardoneth all their sin, accepteth and accounteth their persons as righteous in his sight; not for any thing

wrought in them, or done by them, but only for the perfect obedience and full satisfaction of Christ, by God imputed to them, and received by faith alone." Every erroneous view of the atonement affects, in an equal degree, the doctrine of justification. When the first is given up, the last will fall as a matter of course—and where modified views of the former are held, they will affect the latter also. We accordingly find that when the doctrine of imputation is denied with respect to our fallen state, it is also denied with respect to the death of Christ, and the justification of sinners—so that in the first case, a portion of our race die without being guilty, in the second case Christ suffers inconceivably without any charge of guilt on his own account, or that of others, and in the third case, sinners are justified under a violated law without any righteousness of their own, or another's, and hence justification becomes a mere pardon, contrary to the whole showing of the Scriptures, as well as our standards, in which the ideas of *substitution* and *satisfaction* are kept continually before the mind, and are considered as essential to every correct idea of the true nature of the atonement. In modern instruction, however, no doctrine is so seldom brought to view, and on no subject do you hear such imperfect and

unscriptural exhibitions. Men seem to be afraid of making God *just* as well as merciful in what the Scriptures denominate justification; and they improperly call it simple *pardon*. Indeed, few of them can explain the difference between them, although pardon is a mere remission of punishment, and justification means additionally a restoration to the divine favour, and a valid title to eternal life. The difference between the views entertained on this all important subject, well nigh constitute what Paul calls "another Gospel."

Nor has the doctrine of Regeneration been less corrupted. This benefit of the Covenant of Grace is in our standards denominated, "Effectual calling," and is defined to be "the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel." Here we have a work of God's Spirit on the heart; by which the dead sinner is renewed or quickened, the blind has his eyes divinely opened and illuminated, the careless one is convinced of his sinful and lost estate, his rebellious will is renewed or subdued to new obedience, and his heart enabled, persuaded, or influenced by gospel motives, to embrace,

and of course to follow Christ—and this representation of the case fully agrees with the Scriptures. Now what is this in modern theology and preaching? *A change of the governing purpose*, a thing which it is said a man can as easily effect as he can change his business or his coat. And how? Why by a mere act of his own will. Hence a Presbyterian minister, in a Presbyterian pulpit in this city, prayed, “We do not ask thee, O Lord, to give these sinners power: Thou knowest that they have power enough.” And how is this great change effected? *By moral suasion*—the preacher’s skill in argumentation, or ability in presenting motives of persuasion. If the Holy Ghost has any thing to do with the matter, it is to help the preacher to argue and persuade. The poor hearer’s eternal destiny is thus committed to the tender mercy and skill of his spiritual guide. As to spiritual illumination, communication of knowledge, and conviction of sin, we hear no more of them, than if the Scriptures had been silent concerning them, or the sinner had not needed them. According to this scheme, and it is of wide currency, regeneration is nothing more than the stern determination of a man’s own will to be religious. And when we press them with the difficulties of the case, and the teaching of the

Scriptures on the subject, they think they have sufficiently answered us by a sneer at "Physical Regeneration." The practical effect of all this has been to fill the Church with ignorant and unsound professors, from which nothing but the work of the Spirit, time, discipline, or death will deliver her.

I add, lastly, though I might greatly extend my remarks, that the doctrine of election, with every thing relating to the divine sovereignty, is very extensively passed by in dead silence, as antiquated and useless, or stripped of most of its peculiar and essential characteristics, in order to render it more palatable to carnal minds, and bring it into an easier unison with the views which are held of the other doctrines of which I have spoken. The more common mode, however, has been to suffer it to go into disuse by default. It was my design to have directed your attention, in connexion with the part of the subject considered this evening, to the effects of this, in the alienation of feeling, and want of concert of action produced by it, too great reliance on human plans and efforts, and the withdrawal of the influences of the Holy Spirit from the Church. But time has failed me, and I must leave these important topics to another occasion.

These wide discrepancies from the Gospel of the grace of God, in their rapid advance and extensive spread, are intimately connected with the speculative disposition of a portion of our countrymen; a pride of intellect which cannot bear to leave any thing unexplained; a foolish notion that a system of revealed truth, comprehending the wisdom of God, is as improvable in the hands of a poor, ignorant, short-sighted mortal, as a human art or science which he has left us to spell out by the imperfect light of our reason; the desire of accommodating the doctrines of religion to the corrupt dispositions of men, and rendering them more palatable to the carnal mind; but above all, by the deceitfulness of sin. "The nineteenth century," and "the march of mind," have become phrases of talismanic power, which, if a man can well pronounce, will make him a giant in philosophy and theology too, even if he cannot dig a single root in his Hebrew Bible, construct an argument from prepared materials, or connect two ideas together in an orderly manner.

There have, however, been other causes in operation which have had a mighty influence on this momentous subject, the influence of which has been gradual and almost unsuspected. There was a time when the ministers and elders



of the churches felt that the children of the congregation were their special charge, to be watched over, and instructed in the first principles of our holy religion as contained in our Catechisms. There was also a time when Christian parents felt it to be their duty at some time on the Lord's day, commonly in the evening, to gather their offspring together, and examine them on their knowledge of the Catechism, as well as instruct them, and pray with them. But for a number of years past, unless the practice has been recently changed, these laudable endeavours to bring the young up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord have gone into disuse. This has in part arisen from the idea that they received a sufficiency of instruction in the Sabbath school, where, till recently, a Catechism was seldom found. By this means, ministers, elders, and parents found it an easy matter to relieve their consciences of a weighty burden. But the consequence has been, that a generation or two of our youth have grown up without any systematic and orderly instruction in divine things, well prepared to be impressed by every novelty, and carried about by every wind of doctrine which blow upon them. Would it be strange if a field thus cultivated should produce a harvest of tares?

Shall we not, my dear hearers, learn wisdom from the past? Shall all our unhappy experience be lost upon us? Then will God in vain have held up before us this dark "sign of the times." We shall resemble the children of Israel, of whom the Lord says: "Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken, and hear for the time to come? who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he, against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his law. Therefore he hath poured upon him the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle: and it hath set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." This has been strikingly verified in the present day, with respect to errors in doctrine. The enemy came in so gently, so disguised; and when the mask began to fall off, there was so much zeal, activity, bustle, and seeming good accomplished, that the friends of sound doctrine were afraid to lift up their voices, lest, happily, they might be found contending against God. And in the mean time, those who had sufficient discernment to observe the course of events, and sufficient courage to stand in the breach, and sound the alarm, were

stigmatized as *old dotards*, who were at least fifty years behind the spirit of the age, the enemies of revivals, and the conversion of the world. It was no easy thing to stand up against such a host, and maintain the cause of truth and order. The wonder is, that a stand *was* made, and the progress of the evil arrested.

And, now, what is duty? To learn wisdom from experience—to let the past teach us. This exhortation of God seems to me to be appropriately addressed to his people at the present day: “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths—where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” Study the truth. Love the truth. Maintain the truth. See to it, that it be taught in the churches, and particularly to your youth and children. Especially let parents see to it, that it is taught to their children, not only in the Sabbath-school and catechetical class, but in their houses, and from their lips; for to whom will children listen with as much attention and interest, as to their own fathers and mothers? Draw out the practical effects of the doctrines you profess in your lives, and prove to gainsayers, that the truth produces godliness. And put to the blush the

vile aspersion, that adherence to truth and order are inimical to practical religion and revivals, by renewed activity in promoting the cause of God, both at home and abroad; and by being much engaged in that "fervent and effectual prayer," which the Word of God, and the experience of his people teach, is so effectual in drawing down blessings from his throne. Thus will you put gainsayers to silence, and promote that "kingdom, which is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."

"Now, the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work, to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever."

## LECTURE VII.

### EFFECTS OF CORRUPTION IN DOCTRINE.

MATTHEW XVI. III.

CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

THE last “sign of the times,” to which our attention was directed, was—The alarming and extensive corruption of doctrine which exists at the present day, particularly in our own Church. It was remarked, that we may understand by doctrine, any thing which is taught. Applied to religion it means, the supposed truths or tenets which constitute it what it is, and give it a distinctive character. The doctrines of the Christian religion are, the truths which are taught in the Bible, and these go to make up what is called, “The Christian system.” These have been embodied in *formulas* of greater or less extent, and have been variously denominated, “Confessions of Faith, or “Articles of Religion,” and “Catechisms,” according to the form into which they have been thrown.

It was also remarked, that strong objections had been made to what is called, "doctrinal preaching," principally upon the ground that it was unnecessary. To which it was replied, that the objection, if carried out, would preclude all preaching or instruction, and, that those who were the loudest in their objections, still had doctrines of their own, with the inculcation of which they were well pleased; so that, the objection lay only against the doctrines which they did not relish. It was then shown, that out of this had grown, in the first place, the neglect of certain doctrines, and then their rejection, the intermediate step being, the inculcating of a new philosophy on the subject, directly hostile to its plain meaning, while the doctrine itself was professed to be believed.

A general view was taken of the leading doctrines of the Christian system; and it was shown, that almost every one of them has been impugned by modern errorists, particularly in our own Church, ascertained and proved, by comparing our Confession of Faith and Catechisms with the instructions of these men from the pulpit and the press, on the same subjects. The discrepancy was seen to be wide and radical; and it was remarked, that it was calculated to produce great and unhappy effects. Three points were particularly mentioned, but

their discussion and elucidation were, for want of time, postponed to this evening, viz: 1st. "Alienation of feeling, and want of concert in action." 2d. A too great reliance on instruments to the neglect of God. 3d. The withdrawal of the influences of the Holy Spirit from the Church. These topics, according to promise, will constitute the matter of our meditation this evening, in the order in which they have been mentioned.

1st. *Alienation in feeling and want of concert in action.*

It is a well established principle, that *two cannot walk together except they be agreed*. What men possess in common with each other, is always the basis of their association, and the cause of the satisfaction which they derive from it. This is particularly the case in the concerns of religion. Any great discrepancy of views, especially with respect to important principles, will, as far as they go, abate a portion of that warm and reciprocal affection which makes intercourse so delightful, and action so harmonious and efficient. The converse of this is equally true. When men disagree, they cannot exercise that full flow of affection, and that combination of energy in action, which renders intercourse so delightful, and action so powerful. It may be asked,

how this consists, for instance, with the affectionate union and vigorous efforts of the various denominations of professing Christians, differing so widely from each other in points which are deemed not unimportant, and even radical, in the great Bible cause. The reason is found in a principal which has been incorporated in the Constitution of every general Bible Society, in these words—"without note or comment." Take this away, and you would have as many Bible Societies as there are denominations. And, if it should be further asked, how this accords with the affection entertained for each other by Christians of different denominations? I would answer, in this case, each believes the other to be *honest* in his profession, and a sincere follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in this is laid the foundation of a solid and reciprocal affection.

The case is widely different where the parties concerned profess the same creed, but the one receives it, and teaches it, in its plain, obvious, and generally received sense; while the other holds his solemn profession of it as a matter of very little importance, and in his practice under it, explains it away, and formally, as well as circumstantially, contradicts it, and teaches what is directly contrary to it. In the one case we may respect a man for his inte-



grity, and have confidence in his character, while in the other, it is no easy matter to divest ourselves of the idea that we are dealing with a double-minded man, who is acting a part to answer some unholy and selfish purpose.

It has been thought that both truth and error leave their own impress on the mind. Truth, especially the truth as it is in Jesus, has the effect to purify the heart, and attach it to truth and righteousness. While error blinds the mind, and leads the heart away from God, and makes it reckless of all truth. Errorists are, therefore, in danger of being given over to strong delusion, even to the believing of a lie. None are in so great danger of this as those who, by a formal and solemn profession, are connected with churches who hold as fundamental, the truths which are diametrically opposed to their errors. And the reason is obvious. The connection is formed, if not in falsehood, yet in derogation of the truth, in mental reservation or prevarication. They do not mean literally what others understand by their language and acts.

Such original departures from candour and openfaced honesty have an evil influence on the conscience which is not easily overcome. It gives a warp to the very principle of truth

in a man's heart which rarely ceases to affect him through life, and if it does not lead him to barefaced falsehood, it will make him uncandid and trickish. He will verify the adage,

“Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined.”

This has been found lamentably true with respect to some of the leading errorists of the Christian Church. Among these, Pelagius, who flourished in the early part of the fifth century, holds a prominent rank. Milner in his *Church History* gives the following account of him—“His first writings were an Epistle to Paulinus of Nola, and other little works, in which his erroneous views of grace were so artfully expressed, and so guarded with cautious terms, that Augustine owns he was almost deceived by them. But when he saw his other writings of a later date, he discerned that he might artfully own the word grace, and by retaining the term, break the force of prejudice, and avoid offence, and yet conceal his meaning under a general ambiguity.”

“For, by a dexterity very common with heretics, Pelagius, while he laid open to his converts the whole mystery of his doctrine, imparted only so much to others as might be more calculated to ensnare their affections than to inform them of his real opinions. He used

to deliver his views under the modest appearance of queries, started against the doctrines of the Church, and those as not invented by himself, but by others. The effect of poisoning the minds of men was, however, perhaps more powerfully produced by this, than it would have been by a more direct and positive method." It is added, that "his attempts were to *undermine* the doctrines of grace."

Arminius and his followers in Holland, manifested the same disposition, and followed a similar course. After entering upon the solemn duties of their holy offices, under the most solemn pledges which men could give, of believing the doctrines held by the Church, and engaging to teach them, they laboured with all their might, in a clandestine manner, to undermine and destroy them—and they left no species of trick or subterfuge unemployed to deceive and blind those who were opposed to them as to their real sentiments, gain time to propagate their doctrines, strengthen their cause, and escape the condemnation which they justly deserved.

Any person who will read with attention the history of these errorists, and compare them with the course pursued by those of the present day, will be amazed to observe the simi-

larity, and especially with respect to candour and truth. This remark will probably apply to all errorists who enter churches, being errorists, or who, becoming such, determine to remain in them. They commence their course in deceit and implied falsehood, and vitiate and weaken their moral sense at the start, and give their consciences a lurch from which they rarely recover. This ought not to surprise us. The obligations which the clergyman takes upon his soul, when he assumes his sacred office, are of so awful a nature, that if he can bring his conscience to trifle with truth in that transaction, he will hardly be over fastidious in others. The light of history furnishes instruction on this subject which ought not to be lost upon us.

If the view which has been taken of the subject, even approximates truth, it ought to create no surprise that there have been loss of confidence, alienation of feeling, and want of concert of action in the Presbyterian Church. Her doctrines are so carefully and explicitly stated in her formularies of faith, and the professions and vows of her ministers and elders upon entering on their holy offices are so unequivocal, that wide discrepancies of views with respect to her leading doctrines do not seem very consistent with that high character for

truth and piety which such professions and vows imply, especially if departures are connected with want of candour and openness, and a seeming design to change what we have professed to believe as true and important, and promised to teach and uphold.

Men are undoubtedly entitled to believe and teach such doctrines as they please, under their high responsibility to God. But no man has a right to profess one thing, and believe and teach another. And if he does so, he has no right to ask our respect and confidence. I am very far from believing that a man may not be entitled to my respect and confidence as an honest, conscientious, and pious man, who differs from me even in important things—but I could award him neither, if he professed the same things with me, and at the same time gave me reason to believe that his professions and real belief were at utter disagreement. You have in this the reason of those wide and mournful alienations which have distracted and well nigh destroyed the Presbyterian Church, and why its various parts have lacked that concert in action which should have distinguished her, and would have made her, “clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners.” That high responsibility and heavy blame attaches somewhere, can be

neither denied, nor disguised. That those who conscientiously believe and maintain her standards, have uniformly exercised and cherished right feelings, and contended for, as well as taught the truth in a right manner, and with a right spirit, I dare not assert. But I do aver, that the burden of this rests, and *must* rest, upon those who have departed from the plainness and simplicity of the faith of our common profession, and that they can heal our breaches and divisions by returning to the faith they have professed. Then all hearts would open to receive them—and we should go forth together, under the banner of our Saviour's love, to the conquest of the world. Then would this dark and lurid sign of the times be exchanged for "the bow of promise," God's sign of peace to a ruined world. The truth, however, as embodied in our standards, we cannot give up, for, "we have opened our mouths unto the Lord, and therefore cannot go back."

2d. Another effect resulting from corruption of doctrine has been, "A too great reliance upon instruments to the neglect of God." No principle can be better established than, that however wisely the Divine instrumentalities are arranged for the accomplishment of their objects, that still their efficiency depends entirely on God—just as a set of tools may be well fit-

ted for the construction of a work of art, yet they will accomplish nothing without the hand and mind of the artist. This has been amply acknowledged, by the wisest and best of God's servants. Says Paul, to the Corinthians, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." And again, he saith of all the gifts and graces which adorn the Christian character, "All these worketh that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." The illustration is found in the conversion of Lydia, which must be the same in all other cases. She *heard* Paul and Silas, and became a sincere convert to the Christian faith. And although there were a number of others present who heard the same instruction, she alone was thus affected: and so it has been on a thousand other occasions. What made the difference in her case? The divine record informs us—"Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." This looks very like a work of the Holy Spirit *on the heart of the poor sinner*, or, what our brethren call, "physical regeneration." And this, we suppose, takes place in the conversion of every sinner.

The necessity of this is laid in the natural condition of our race. We are described in

the Word of God, not only as “blind” and “deaf,” but, as “dead in trespasses and sins;” a state of not only deplorable wretchedness, but of entire helplessness, from which nothing but the supernatural agency and almighty energy of the Holy Spirit can relieve us. Our brethren tell us, no—it requires nothing more than a little skill on the part of the preacher in presenting and urging motives, or, what is technically called, “moral suasion,” and the work is done, provided the sinner at the proper time make the right choice, and put forth a vigorous effort of his will, which he can do with the same facility that he can determine to go to New York rather than to Baltimore. Otherwise, say they, man is not a moral agent, for that implies, “the power of a contrary choice.” that is to say, although a man may have ten thousand reasons or motives to seek the salvation of his soul, and not one to neglect it, he cannot be a moral agent, unless he have the power of determining to be damned without any motive at all. Or, in other words, that a man sins because he *will* sin, and not because he is *enticed* by his lusts.

It having been thus summarily settled, that man is not totally depraved, or, according to the teachings of the Scriptures, “dead in trespasses and sins,” the peculiar office and work



of the Holy Spirit are superseded, and men are prepared to rely upon the inventions and skilful efforts of their fellow creatures, to bring them out of nature's darkness into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God. Hence, men talk familiarly of *getting up* revivals of religion, the whole secret of which consists in getting together a few ministers of *the right stamp*, preaching to the people a few days, concerning moral agency and their ability to change their own hearts, getting their minds excited on the subject by continued effort, committing them by coming to the anxious-seat, and determining to be religious, while, at the same time, you hear little or nothing concerning their sinful, guilty, and undone condition, repentance, faith, the doings and sufferings of the Saviour, the work of the Holy Spirit, confession of sin, the distinguishing nature of religious exercises, the nature and necessity of self-examination, the deceitfulness and wickedness of the human heart, the calls and invitations of the Gospel, the moral resemblance of the Christian to his Master, Christ, and the peculiar characteristics of the Christian life. Nearly all of these would be thought out of place, and so would almost all the distinguishing doctrines of our holy religion; and the minister who should bring forward such topics,

would not be welcome on such occasions. He would be accused of marring the work, and hindering its progress. Every thing which looks like an exhibition of human nature, as it is described in the Scriptures, or the peculiar agency of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of sinners, or dependence upon his influences, must be kept as far out of sight as possible, lest sinners should remit their own exertions. Why are these things so, if men have not lost sight of their dependence on God, and rely upon an arm of flesh? Why, if he be the efficient agent in the conversion of sinners, are not men referred to God for the bestowment of this unspeakable gift, since he has said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" Why are men afraid to deal in such encouraging truths, if they have not rejected them? In apostolical days it was not so. Then, they could exhort men to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling," by the consideration, that it was God who works in them, both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Can it be otherwise, under such instruction, than that men should rely, either upon the stern determination of their own wills, or the persuasive skill and power of

others to produce that stupendous change which is denominated, "regeneration?" How can they fail to entertain such sentiments, when they are continually sounded in their ears? And if it be true, that our religion takes its type from the instruction which we receive, then it will follow, that the religion thus induced will stand, not in the power of God, but in the wisdom of men. Who, then, can be surprised, that it should prove as the morning cloud and the early dew? of which, the present day furnishes such numerous and melancholy illustrations.

Do you fear that I would make man a mere stock, and take away his moral responsibilities?—that I would furnish him with a warrant to stand still, and fold his hands to sleep? Far from it, my hearers. Does it indulge a man in idleness, to exhort him to "work out his own salvation with fear and trembling," and encourage him to do so by the consideration, that "it is God who works in him, both to will and to do of his good pleasure," especially when it is connected with faithful exhibitions of the danger he incurs by every hour's delay. Is it a discouragement to be informed, of his entire helplessness and dependence, when he is at the same time told, that God is more willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him

than parents are to give bread to their hungry children? It may mortify their pride, but, in itself, it is the greatest encouragement we can possibly have, for it assures us of an influence which nothing is able to resist. It is a vile slander, which is cast upon men, who, while they honour the grace of God in the conversion of sinners, and follow the direction of his Word, and the example of his inspired servants, in exhibiting *the whole* truth, exhort, and urge their fellow creatures with as much affection and force as others, to “strive to enter in at the straight gate.” From dependence on instruments, to the neglect of the Holy Spirit, of whom, and his influences, little is heard in the preaching or prayers of these men, has resulted,

3d. To no inconsiderable extent, the withdrawal of the influences of the Holy Spirit from the Church. The fact, that those divine influences with which the Church was blessed a few years ago, and which caused so much joy among the people of God, have, to a great extent, ceased, admits of no dispute. Mournful as the fact is, it cannot be denied. That there must be a cause for it, admits of no doubt. Nor can we hesitate in believing, that the cause must be sought in the Church. It has been attributed to the disputes and divi-

sions which have existed in the Church. These have not only occupied the attention of multitudes, to the neglect of many Christian duties, but, from the evil influence which they have exerted on the hearts of Christians, have unfitted them rightly to desire and seek the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Under these circumstances, a healthful influence from heaven could not have been expected. For this, a dreadful responsibility rests upon all who have indulged those tempers, by which the Holy Spirit has been grieved, and especially upon those by whom the offence has come. "Woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." The whole Church has reason to be humbled in the very dust before God on this account. Who is free from this sin? Who has no reason to mourn? Who can fail to see in this one reason why the Lord has withdrawn the influences of the Holy Spirit?

But this is not the only reason. There has been, among those who hold the truth in righteousness, a sinking of the heart, which has enfeebled and crippled them in prayer and exertion, so that they have been afraid to stretch their desires abroad, and use with the Lord that holy boldness and importunity in which he delights, and which has so often drawn down blessings from on high. And then again,

when they have heard doctrines preached, and seen practices pursued, which they deemed contrary to the word of God, and yet saw effects wrought which appeared to indicate the presence and power of God, they have sometimes, without due consideration, been carried away by the current, disregarding truth and order, thus grieving the Holy Spirit. Or, they have stood still, made no exertion, and received the reward of idleness. Or, they have refrained bearing witness for the truth, for fear of being found fighting against God, who seemed to bless what appeared to them to be error, the fruit not having yet developed itself. Thus they have been paralysed, both in heart and action, to an extent from which they have not yet recovered themselves. Their perplexities have been increased by the taunts of errorists, who have accused them of holding sentiments which precluded the use of means for the promotion of revivals and godliness, and which they declared to be hostile to both, until they almost believed the slander, and were afraid to bestir themselves. They well nigh became what they were slanderously reported to be. Thanks be to God, this delusion is beginning to vanish away, and a day appears to be dawning, when the lovers of truth and order shall shake off this benumbing lethargy, and do

their duty to God and the world. Then it will be fully manifest, whether truth and error are equally conducive to revivals of pure and undefiled religion; and it will cease to be difficult to distinguish between the precious and the vile—between truth and error—between the will of God, and the inventions of men.

I advert to only one reason more, why the influences of the Spirit have to so great a degree been withdrawn from the Church. I allude to the fact, that they have, to a very great extent, been undervalued, and almost superseded by the inventions of men. I have already remarked, that but little is heard of the influences of the Holy Spirit, either in the preaching or prayers of some of the ministers of that Saviour, who said to the disciples, “Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.” And they did tarry till they received the Pentecostal anointing, and then went forth to the conquest of the world. This great truth, however, seems to be as studiously avoided by many as if they felt afraid to let the people know that there is such a being as the Holy Spirit, or that men needed him to regenerate, enlighten, comfort, and sanctify their souls; probably because they have imbibed the senti-

ments, that men are not “dead in trespasses and sins”—are not totally depraved—can as easily change their hearts as their garments—have need only to have the truth rightly presented to their minds in order to love, choose, and obey it; that, if these things are not so, then man is no moral agent, possesses all the power necessary to accomplish all the purposes of his salvation, and if it were otherwise, then would God be a tyrant to require him to obey, and unjust to punish him.

If such sentiments are correct, then truly have we no need of the influences of the Holy Spirit, and men do right to repudiate him. But, if they be as false as the Bible teaches them to be, then let no man wonder why, where they are taught, the Holy Spirit, quenched and grieved, should withdraw himself from them, and leave them to the inefficiency of their own inventions. May not this be had in view in such a declaration as this, “I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face.” Is there not a sufficient reason in all this for the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from those who thus treat him? Does not this satisfactorily account for the dearth and barrenness which exist to so great and lamentable an extent in the Church at the present day? And



will there ever be a change for the better till men shall say to each other, "Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us: he hath smitten, and he will bind us up."

From this subject we may learn,

1st. That departures from the truth and order of God's house are both sinful and dangerous. The essential truths, or doctrines, of the Christian religion are so fully and clearly stated in the Scriptures as to make their obvious meaning easily understood; and, in fact, the difficulties of men with respect to them have commenced with attempts at reconciling them with sentiments previously imbibed. In these attempts, if they have not been possessed with a high reverence for the word of God, their fondness of their own mental views has led them so to interpret the holy oracles as to bring them, as nearly as possible, into harmony with these. Successful attempts have led them to make new experiments, until at length they have elaborated a new gospel, bearing very few of the characteristics of that Gospel, which plain common sense and humble piety would recognise from a perusal of the sacred pages. Whether this can innocently take place, is a grave question, which men should scrupulously

ponder. It is, at all events, very certain, that no man can proceed either far or long in such a course, and maintain a becoming reverence for the word of God, or fail of having his heart perverted by error. And the danger is greatly increased if they have previously subscribed to a system of doctrine, for they are obliged to tamper with, or pollute their consciences at the start. They may, in this case, have been innocently convinced that they have adopted a system which they do not *now* believe; but they cannot innocently continue in the profession of a system the essentials of which they have repudiated, or the connexion in which it has placed them.

Nor will the sin of such a course be diminished when we look at the distrust, alienations, bickerings, and contentions which, almost necessarily, grow out of such a state of things. Who can have confidence in a man who disregards his own solemn professions? Or, who can rely upon one who is as unstable as water? Can it be innocent to destroy "the unity of the Spirit," and rupture "the bonds of peace" in a Church? What becomes of the beauty and order of God's house? the edification of the body of Christ? the salvation of souls? What must it lead the world to think of religion itself? Let the history and state of our own

beloved portion of Zion, so long and greatly favoured of God, answer these questions, and let the churches and ministers of God ponder them in their hearts, and learn wisdom from past folly and sin. Let them look at the desolations which have been made, and, if they have any sympathy with mourning, bleeding Zion, let them cry with their whole heart, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people."

2d. This subject should teach churches and ministers the importance of guarding against the first departures from the doctrines of our holy religion as they are taught in the Scriptures, and embodied in the public and authorized standards, even though they may seem small and unimportant. Error is not ordinarily of mushroom growth. It is commonly produced by little and little. Aberrations commence in shades of difference. They relate perhaps to articles which are esteemed of minor importance. They do not affect the vitals of religion. They may be commenced by good and useful men, and it would wound their feelings and hinder their usefulness, were you to admonish them or call them to an account. Meek-eyed charity cries, "Is it not a

little city?" "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth." Had Solomon's advice been followed, what a world of difficulty and sin would have been prevented. "Take us the foxes, the *little* foxes, that spoil the vines." This good and useful man may have an inquisitive and speculative mind. He has gotten into a world of pleasing novelties. He passes on from trifling to more grave and weighty matters, and his changes still please him. He has, by modification, made the gospel more palatable to some mind which had before been embarrassed by some of the aspects and relations of truth. It may be that his labours have been apparently, perhaps really, blessed to many. What follows? He becomes given to change. His mind is unsettled and restless. He tries his experiments on the weightier matters of the law with equal success and satisfaction to himself, until the very landmarks of truth vanish from his vision, and he is afloat on a boundless ocean without chart or compass. He attributes his success to his novelties, and exalts them above the clear dictates of the Spirit. Others become captivated by *his* imaginations. A party is formed. The strife commences. The Church is agitated, distracted, torn, divided:—and the Holy Spirit, grieved by such a state of things, takes his

flight to heaven. And should the leaven begin to operate in an age like the present, when the foundations of ages are torn up, and the human mind is loosed from its moorings, it will be a wonder, if the grace of God prevent not, if the waters of this flood do not rise above the tops of the highest mountains. This, however is our consolation. The ark of God is safe. But, O, what a mass of evil might have been prevented, if even a few minds had been possessed of a little more modesty, humility, self-distrust, or wisdom! Or, if the Church of God had taken timely precaution to correct the evil! Has not the Lord rebuked and punished her for her want of watchfulness and faithfulness, and grasping ambition to spread herself out "like a green bay tree," and foolish confidence in her own power and strength? Let us receive the divine rebuke with meekness and humility, and watch and pray that we fall not again into this temptation!

3d. Finally: Let us acknowledge our sin before God, forsake the evil of our ways, realize our dependence upon God for the success of all our efforts to build up his kingdom, and with deep humility of soul, and much fervency and importunity of prayer, seek the return of the blessed Comforter, the Holy Ghost, to the Church, from which we have grieved him away

by our sins. Let us say again to each other, in the language and spirit of the prophet, "come, and let us return unto the Lord; for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten and he will bind us up." Such a withdrawal of divine influences as the Presbyterian body has experienced is not to be accounted for independently of sin; "sin lieth at the door." If error be sinful, *we have tolerated it*. Or if we have contended for the truth, have we always done so in a Christian spirit, and with spiritual weapons? Have we not been so proud, and vain-glorious of the success and enlargement which God hath given us as to "forget the rock from whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit from which we were digged," and with it, our dependence upon God? And in consequence of this, has not prayer been restrained? And then again God has been dishonoured, and the Holy Spirit grieved, as well by unscriptural compliances for the promotion of revivals, as by a sinking of the heart, which denoted want of confidence in God and in his truth to promote his glory in the salvation of sinners. These are so many causes for deep self-abasement and humiliation before God, and repentance for our sins; as well as reasons for returning to him with mourning, and weeping, and lamentation. Let this be our prayer: "O

that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence." "O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy?" And then the day will soon come when he will put a new song into our mouths, and these shall be some of its notes—"Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him; and we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation." May sovereign mercy hasten it in its season!

## LECTURE VIII.

### SPIRIT OF FANATICISM.

#### MATTHEW XVI. III.

##### CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

THE last “sign of the times,” to which your attention was directed, was—The corruption of doctrine in the Christian Church, especially in our own branch of it; and the effects of this corruption: 1st. In alienation of feeling, and want of concert in action. 2d. Too great reliance on human plans and efforts in building up the cause of Christ. 3d. The withdrawal of the influences of the Holy Spirit, without which the Church of God can neither be maintained, enlarged, beautified, strengthened, nor rendered efficient. The course of investigation showed, conclusively, that these effects had, to a great and lamentable extent, resulted from these causes as their fruits; that their influence on the interests of religion had been very deleterious; that a great amount of blame must necessarily rest on those, who,



*professing* a pure faith, had nevertheless held and taught corrupt doctrines, and thereby, contrary to vows voluntarily taken, and obligations voluntarily contracted, destroyed both the purity and peace of the Church, hindered its edification, and paralysed its influence; that it is the duty of such men to renounce their errors, or, in default of this, if they would act the part of honest men, to separate themselves from churches, whose doctrines they have either never believed, or concerning which they have changed their views; and finally, that it is the duty of the Church to hold fast the form of sound words, guard with more sedulous care against the introduction of unsound men and unsound doctrines, shake off her apathy and sloth, and do her duty to the world, and to God.

Having completed this part of the original plan, designed to be pursued in these exercises, I intend this evening to direct your attention to another striking feature of the age in which we live—a sign which has left a deep and broad mark upon our times, and exercised no small influence on the cause of God, as well as on many other important interests. I mean,

VII. *The spirit of fanaticism.*

It will probably not be denied, that there has seldom, if ever, been an age when the human

mind has been more unsettled and restless than the present. Principles, which for ages had been thought to be well defined and thoroughly settled, have been called in question, and, in connexion with it, the human mind has received an impulse which has carried it forward with a rapidity which would formerly have been contemplated with amazement, and with fear for the consequences. Such, however, have been the nature and extent of the changes wrought, that they are looked upon as mere common-place events.

To what period to assign the impulse, of which I have spoken, may not be an easy matter—nor may it be more easy to settle the subject which gave occasion to it. It may, however, be assumed as a fact, that if no novel principles, as to human rights and civil government, were broached by the fathers of our Revolution, that they received a development, and acquired a practical importance which they never knew before, and they have, ever since, been exercising a mighty influence on the mind of man and the civil institutions of the world. Previous to this period, while his Holiness of Rome was reposing on his downy cushions in the Vatican, and resting after his long contest with the Reformers—and the potentates of Europe were pursuing their schemes

of politics and war, as if all the interests of all mankind were involved in them—a set of men, who were, seemingly, quietly devoted to literature, science, or pleasure, had either reasoned or lived themselves into scepticism, now set their worldly wisdom in array against all established institutions, and produced the infidelity, and the wars, and revolutions which illustrated the latter years of the last century, when, events enough, civil, intellectual, moral, and religious, to fill up ages, were crowded into a few years.

I will add, and it has by no means been unimportant, or without its influence, that, previous to the middle of the last century, true religion itself has received an impulse, to which it had for a long time been a stranger. The fervours of the Reformation had subsided; the great doctrine of life—justification by faith, through the imputed righteousness of Christ, had slept, or been abandoned; and religion itself, even among Protestants, had degenerated into form, when, the whole subject received a fresh impetus, both in Great Britain and America, which it has never lost. The fruits have been seen and felt in every part of the world, as they have developed themselves in the enlargement of the Church, and in the operation of Bible, Missionary, Tract, and Education So-

cieties. An equal degree of zeal and activity for the propagation of the Gospel, and the amelioration of the condition of our race, has rarely been witnessed.

Such have been the nature and extent of the changes which have taken place, and such the spirit of the age in which we live, that the fond anticipation has been indulged that the latter day glory had already arrived, and the subjection of the world to the cross of Christ would scarcely require a struggle. It requires not the ken of a prophet to tell that these anticipations are doomed to disappointment. The anticipations of men have been as extreme as their principles and practices—and this has been one of the species of tares which the adversary has sown in this field, otherwise so promising. The age in which we live is one of extremes. It has proved *ultra* or fanatical in almost every thing. The impulse has carried men beyond the mark. Every thing of which they have taken hold has been magnified beyond its just proportions, if not beyond its true dimensions, and thus received an importance to which it was not entitled. The mind has dwelt intently on a single object, or it has brought that object so near to the eye, that it has appeared to be single and alone in the world. Whereas, if it had been placed in an-

other position, and at a little greater distance from the eye, its true as well as relative magnitude could be better ascertained and determined; but then, if the mind had been labouring under a fond delusion with respect to it, it would create a degree of pain to be undeceived. My hearers would think me in extremes, if not in the extreme of madness, if I should tell them that the sun, the great orb of day, was not as large as a half dollar—and yet I can so place that little object as to hide the sun from my view. And so a matter, which, when viewed in its just proportions and relations, shall be seen and felt to be of much less importance than another with which it may be compared, may become absorbing as the one thing needful when it is not only seen alone, but dwelt upon, commended and magnified. This I consider as a distinguishing characteristic of our age, and this I call fanaticism, and this I design more fully to illustrate in the remainder of this discourse. I have already intimated that there is scarcely a department of business or life into which the spirit of excess has not been carried, and where its influence has not been felt.

It has manifested itself in the various departments of business. These have been pursued, not for the purpose of affording men

healthful employment, and a decent living, but for the purpose of accumulating wealth; and when the movement has not been a rapid one, it has been attended with an uneasy, restless, discontented spirit, which has watched every opportunity of change, and rushed after every gilded phantom which a wild imagination has raised up before the mind. Men have not only grown impatient of the slow avails of honest, persevering industry, and dissatisfied with the prospect of a well earned competence, enough to satisfy a well balanced and contented mind, but they have gathered up all, and embarked it on the tempestuous ocean of speculation. Nothing would serve them but to be suddenly rich. Of the dangers of failure, or the shipwreck of conscience, they have made no more account than they have of the effect it would be likely to produce on their minds in unfitting them for sober business, or rational enjoyment, or on the character, comfort, and prospects of their families, or on the fortunes of those with whom business may have connected them. Such things as these are scarcely worthy of a thought in the "nineteenth century," and unnecessary clogs to "the march of mind." The man has made up his mind to be rich, and *suddenly*, rich, and if ninety-nine out of every hundred who have made the attempt upon the

same principle, have failed, you cannot convince *him* that he will not be the hundredth man in the next class of adventurers. And if an equal proportion have made shipwreck of faith and a good conscience in making the attempt, it would be no easy matter to convince *him* that it is a difficult thing for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, or for a man whose mind has been soured and corroded by worldly losses and disappointments to turn his attention at once, and with interest, to the subject of religion. A divine oracle would fail to work the conviction in him. This is the spirit of our age, the spirit of our American youth—the Moloch upon whose altar so many precious souls are sacrificed. This, a year or two ago, filled the United States Treasury to overflowing from the sales of our western lands—built so many cities in the wilderness, on paper—fattened the soil of Louisiana with the dead bodies of the prime young men of our country, and which God has recently so terribly rebuked. Is it misnamed, “the fanaticism of cupidity?”

The spirit has other forms, and other names. It is a universal intermeddler. It will let nothing alone. Nothing good or holy can engage the attention of men, but it rushes in, and endeavours to appropriate it to itself. It is not

many years since a moral leprosy came to the aid of original sin, and threatened an almost universal destruction. It was at deadly strife with property, health, all the comforts of domestic life, all the hallowed influences of the social principle and relations, human life, and the salvation of mens' souls. It was fast peopling the grave and hell with its victims. It was rapidly extending the circle of its deadly influence. The rich and the poor, the high and the low, the old and the young, were its victims. The farmer and the mechanic, the young man and the maiden, the husband and the wife, the parent and the child, the statesman, the lawyer, the physician, the Christian, the deacon, the elder, the minister of the everlasting Gospel, all, all, were among its victims. It acted as a slow poison. It was an insidious enemy. It often came as an angel of light, a minister of health, a handmaid of hospitality. And the malady was the more deadly, because it well nigh paralysed the medicine of life, the Gospel of the grace of God.

Philosophers, physicians, philanthropists, patriots, Christians, ministers of the everlasting Gospel, all mourned over the wide spreading evil, and mourned almost without hope. It was the sin of intemperance. This was the name of the foul fiend. A simple remedy was ap-



plied. The union of the friends of man in a public pledge to abstain from alcoholic drinks. Blessed be the man into whose mind the happy thought first entered. His race have known few greater benefactors. In this, as in every thing else, union creates strength. O, what wonders has the development of this principle wrought; what happy changes have we witnessed; what victories over beastly and soul destroying appetites. But the arch fiend envied man, and grace, and God, such a victory—and flew to the rescue, and sowed dissension in the camp, and sought to sever from the brotherhood its best friends, upon whom, under God, its dearest hopes will be found to rest. I mean the covenanted friends of Christ. But how? By seeking to exalt temperance, a single branch of Gospel morality, above religion itself; thus making it of more worth than that which makes us meet for heaven—constituting the temperance pledge a test of Christian character and church communion, a rule unknown to the Church and word of God—and establishing it as a principle that any use of wine, no matter how small the quantity, is a sin; of course, banishing it from the Table of the Lord, although the Saviour himself has made it a symbol of that blood which was shed for the remission of sin. These assump-

tions Christians have never believed, and to these principles they can never submit. The urging of these points, often in intemperate and abusive terms, has made many a Christian pause, and caused many a man who tasted no intoxicating drink, to withhold his name from the temperance pledge, and the public support of a cause which was dearer to him than his life. Thus has Satan succeeded in making the *real* friends of Christ, the *seeming* enemies of the cause of temperance. And thus has the spirit of fanaticism injured a cause which every good man must love. Let me say to Christians, beware how you withhold yourselves from the support of a cause, so important and good in itself, on account of the folly, or even wickedness, of its professed friends. And to all others I say, you may be never so temperate, and lose your soul. Temperance is not religion.

Again, the operation of this spirit may also be seen in the views which are entertained, and the conduct which is pursued with respect to human rights. Probably no people on earth have ever better understood the principles of civil and religious liberty, or been more strongly attached to them, than the inhabitants of these United States. This has led them earnestly to desire that all other nations may possess insti-

tutions similar to our own, to hail with joy every approximation to it, and to anticipate with confidence the near approach of the day when it shall take place. This may all be right and proper, but it is both foolish and fanatical to suppose all nations, however ignorant and degraded, are capable of forming, maintaining, and enjoying institutions equally free and happy, or that we have a call in Divine Providence to interfere with them. Upon such, the examples of France, Spain, and the Mexican and South American States, are lost. They are incapable of perceiving the necessary connexion which exists between civil liberty, and intelligence and virtue. France and Spain have receded. The cry of liberty and equality has died on the ear, and the revolutions to the south of us have followed each other like the waves of a troubled ocean, whose agitated waters are continually casting up mire and dirt. So wild are a portion of the American people on the subject, that it has more than once required all the wisdom, and vigilance, and energy of our government, to restrain the people from hurrying us into a foreign war.

And free and happy as our institutions are, leaving the wise and good nothing to desire on the subject but a sufficiency of intelligence and virtue to enjoy, and preserve our immunities

and privileges, and hearts to adore and praise the giver of every good and perfect gift, there are many in our land, who, impatient of all restraint, would prostrate the very institutions and laws by which our liberty and privileges are secured and maintained. Witness the ravings of a foreign profligate female in a neighbouring city on the day of sacred rest, and the thousands who follow and applaud her. This, however, is a mere drop in the bucket; the wild vapourings of infidelity and agrarianism in a state of combination—and will serve to show how exceedingly foolish men can be when they adopt the abominable absurdity that there is no God. Perhaps the following specimen, selected from the proceedings of the peace convention, composed of men and women, laymen and clergymen, convened at Boston on the 18th of September last, may more fully illustrate the subject. The second article of their constitution reads thus: “The members of this society agree in opinion, that no man, or body of men, however constituted, or by whatever name called, have the right to take the life of man as a penalty for transgression; that no one who professes to have the Spirit of Christ, can consistently sue a man at law for redress of injuries, or thrust any evil doer into prison, or fill any office in which he would come under obli-

gation to execute penal enactments—or take any part in the military service—or acknowledge allegiance to any human government—or justify any man in fighting in defence of property, liberty, life, or religion—that he cannot engage in or countenance any plot or effort to revolutionize, or change, by physical violence, any government, however corrupt or oppressive; that he will obey the powers that be, except in those cases in which they bid him violate his conscience; and then, rather than resist, he will meekly submit to the penalty of disobedience; and that, while he will cheerfully endure all things for Christ's sake, without cherishing even the desire to inflict injury upon his persecutor, yet he will be bold and uncompromising for God, in bearing his testimony against sin, in high places, and in low places, until righteousness and peace shall reign in all the earth, and there shall be none to molest or make afraid."

If any doubt could exist, as to the meaning of the foregoing article, the following "declaration of sentiment," accompanying it, would remove it: "We cannot acknowledge allegiance to any human government"—"We love the land of our nativity only as we love all other lands"—"No resistance ought to be offered to domestic troublers of the peace, or of private

security"—“ We, therefore, voluntarily exclude ourselves from every legislative and judicial body, and repudiate all human politics, worldly honours, and stations of authority: if *we* cannot occupy a seat in the legislature, or on the bench, neither can we elect others to act as our substitutes in any such capacity.” My hearers, what shall we call all this? These are the enactments and declarations of American citizens, many of them well educated men and women, some of them professing Christians, and even clergymen. Are these the deductions of right reason, or Christian intelligence; or are they the wild ravings of hair-brained, moon-stricken fanatics?

Whatever they are, they are the results of the wisdom of the men who are agitating the country with the subject of anti-slavery, or modern abolitionism. Of this institution, to some of whose doings I have directed your attention, Lloyd Garrison is the Corresponding Secretary, and the Rev. H. C. Wright, a leading member. So that, the same spirit actuates both bodies, and the same results may be expected from their doings. The association would, at once, destroy all law and government, with every connected institution, civil and religious, and call it, carrying out the principles of peace; and the latter is labouring

hard to subvert the constitution of the country, and break up the Union of the States, by inflaming the passions of men, and exciting the bitter feelings and angry passions of one portion of our countrymen against another, for the purpose of attaining an object which, by such means, is either utterly hopeless, or attainable only by the slaughter of one-half of the inhabitants of our country. The effect, thus far, has been, only to excite a great deal of angry feelings, abridge the privileges of those for whose benefit they professed to act, increased the friends of slavery, deadened the sympathy which was felt in our land for the African race, and not improbably postponed, for a long time, the day of emancipation.

But, when was the spirit of fanaticism wise? When was a blind zeal ever known to form judicious plans, or to take prudent or practical measures for their accomplishment? If their motives were never so good and holy at the start, they might very easily, and probably would, become so heated in the chase as to become reckless; and others, as destitute of principle as of sound discretion, would, by their zeal, be attracted to them, and rush on with them, and the cause would very soon cease to have the excuse even of good motives to sanctify it. This, I apprehend, has, to a

considerable extent, become the case with anti-slavery, by attempting to unite with the politics of the day. Let the wise and the good, who love their country and its institutions, be on their guard against every fanatical movement, and, withal, their own spirits! The greater watchfulness and care are necessary, because religion itself has been attempted to be drawn into this vortex, and the principles of modern abolitionism have been sought to be made a test of Christian character and religious fellowship. It is one of the wedges which has been applied to split the Presbyterian Church in two, as well as dis sever the union of these States; and in this form, and with these sentiments as good as avowed, it deserves, and should receive, the pointed condemnation of all who feel the importance of truth and order, in Church or State.

It would be strange, my hearers, if such a spirit, in such an age as the present, when the human mind has become so restless, and when the very dictates of the Holy Spirit are said to be improvable by human wisdom, had not intruded itself directly into the concerns of religion. Perhaps it might reasonably have been expected. It has accordingly taken place. There has seldom been an age, when errors in principle and practice have had a more rapid



growth and wide-spread. I refer not now to the rise and spread of Unitarianism, in the eastern part of our country. That is a system which has not vitality enough to excite either the feelings or the imaginations of men. It aims at arrogating to itself the learning, philosophy, and politeness of the age. It is a "dead sea," whose heavy waters no winds appear to be capable of raising into waves.

I allude to the system of error, which has falsified the true nature of the atonement, denied, substantially, original sin, and with it, the views which the Scriptures give us of the nature and necessity of the Spirit's operations in regeneration, substituting for them the self-determining power of the human will, under the exciting influences of protracted meetings, strong appeals to the principles of self-love, duty, and the supposed ability which men possess to change their own hearts, anxious-seats, and other human machinery—means, by which great excitements have been produced, many souls have been introduced into the Church, and high hopes raised concerning the enlargement and glory of Zion, but which, as the event has proved, has served to fill the Church with unsound members, almost destroyed the effect of the ordinary and stated ministrations of the Word and ordinances, rendered the pas-

toral office well nigh useless, given a fitful character to religion, and made the Church, where it has had its fullest influence, like a forest through which a devouring fire has passed.

“By their fruits,” says the blessed Saviour, “ye shall know them: Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” There was in all this, life, and activity, and zeal. Masses of men, in whole districts of country, were not only moved, but agitated. Astonishing effects were wrought. But there was little of the meekness, gentleness, and humility of Christ, even where there was evidence of a radical change, and, more commonly, it soon became manifest, that much of it was the mere effect of sympathy, or the formation of a stern resolution to be religious, very much apart from all real conviction of sinfulness, and that work of the Holy Spirit, by which men are created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works. Nor need these things be wondered at, if it be true, as is said, that men can get such movements up at their pleasure, and change “their governing purpose” at will. Of these things, in forms somewhat modified and varied, our age and country have seen, heard, and felt much. It is no difficult thing to obtain believers, admirers, and followers for any system of doctrine or practice, be it never so contrary,

not only to God's well-attested, revealed will, but the best established principles of experience, and the common sense of mankind. And, what ought to excite no small degree of wonder, if any of the vagaries of fanaticism are to be wondered at, men will receive them without evidence as divine, and stake their eternal all on them, who will believe nothing which the Bible teaches, although it be attested by miracles wrought, by prophecies fulfilled, by the phenomena of nature, by the history of nations, by the wants and maladies of human nature, and the experience of millions of our race. They prefer the very dreams and wild imaginations of Mormonism to these, however well attested. Nothing is too absurd to be believed and practiced. My hearers, "the times are out of joint," and this is one of the moral maladies of the day. Every thing has felt it, and every thing has been injured by it. And religion has not been among the least sufferers by it. What will render it difficult of cure is, that men hold the dreams of their wild imaginations to be the highest dictates of wisdom. The ship is afloat, and loosed from her moorings, with every sail set, and filled, but, alas! she is destitute of ballast, rudder, compass, and pilot, and, if we had no divine security, the voyage would be hopeless.

What shall we do in such a case? What can we do but repudiate the dreams and imaginations of men, and get back as fast as possible to the principles of sober sense, and revealed truth. When they cry, "Lo! here is Christ, or, lo! there," let us not go after them. "We have, also, a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto, ye do well to take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place." A constant, humble, prayerful regard to the plain, unsophisticated testimonies of God's word, will be an admirable safeguard against the sophistries and delusive imaginations, with which multitudes are deceiving themselves, and endangering others. This will preserve us from being *carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.* And then, too, we shall be able to follow the direction of the Apostle John. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world." This is now as true as it was when John wrote. But it is equally true, that false doctrines, and lying spirits, may be detected, by bringing them to the law and the testimony; and that the man whose heart is deeply imbued with the love of the truth, and makes the word of God the man of his coun-

sel, and the guide of his life, will not very easily be led astray. Let him only be rooted and grounded in the love and truth of God, and he shall be as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed.

We may, from this, readily perceive why a restless, fanatical spirit has obtained such a wide currency, and exercised such an extensive influence in the present day. The minds of men have been empty. They have had a very imperfect and superficial acquaintance with the word of God. They have not made the holy oracles their own, by meditation and reflection. They have devoured every thing indiscriminately, and digested nothing, and the consequence has been, that they have not grown in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And, what is worse, they are proud of their folly, and have proved it by calling the present, "the age of action"—as if the whole of religion consisted in action; or, as if there could be any correct, consistent action which was not based on principle, and guided by knowledge. Men have run before they were called, and, when questioned on the subject, have been unable to give a reason of the hope that is in them. They have adopted their own notions as the doctrines of Christ, and the practices which

they found to produce the most visible effects, as the best calculated to benefit the souls of men, because they were strangers to the nature and necessity of the Spirit's influences, as taught in the sacred Scriptures; and others, who ought to have known better, and who probably did know better, deceived by what they heard and saw, and not taking time to test the effects, by time and the word of God, were led to follow in the train, for fear of being found fighting against God. The evil will never be cured till Christians become careful and diligent students of God's word, and, with meekness, humility, and reverence, derive both their principles and practices from its simple teachings.

Again: If you would avoid the spirit, against which I have endeavoured to warn you, think and reflect much on divine things, with fervent prayer to God that he would give you a right understanding of *his* word, and *your* duty. A thoughtful, reflecting mind, is never a light and trifling one, carried away, headlong, by the passions of the heart, or the dreams and imaginations of an ill-furnished head. The fanatic rarely thinks, or, if he does, it is seldom to much purpose. He is always in a hurry. Like Jehu, he driveth furiously; and, like him, a stranger to the love

and knowledge of God, he is apt to cry, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord." The Apostle Paul bore witness of the Jews of his day: "That they had a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." And what was the consequence? They crucified the Lord of glory, and persecuted his followers. They took counsel of their passions. They were fanatics. Thought and reflection would have allayed these cruel and wicked passions, and kept them in abeyance.

Finally: Let it not be taken for granted, that these views of truth and duty are opposed to zeal and activity in the Lord's service, or, that they will furnish an excuse for sloth and idleness, and warrant a man to sit down, and fold his hands to sleep. Whatever others may think on the subject, it is no part of my meaning. If there be any one subject, which has a just claim to occupy every power, both of head and heart, it is the subject of religion. There is enough in it, personally considered, to furnish a full warrant for the exhortation, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." There is enough in the state and danger of sinners to make every Christian feel as Jeremiah did, when he cried, "O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the

slain of the daughter of my people!" Paul did not press the subject beyond its just and proper bounds, when he said to the Corinthians, "Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." Every child of God, as well as every minister of the Gospel, should be, not only a *shining*, but a *burning* light. His understanding should be full of divine light, and his heart of divine love. His soul, body, and spirit should be the Lord's. This, however, may be, and yet the man be at an infinite remove from cold-hearted, inconsistent fanaticism. The one resembles an eccentric comet, wandering in the sky; while the path of the other, is as "the shining light, that shineth more and more, even unto the perfect day." So may all, who professedly belong to the Lord, speedily become, and the reproach of Zion be forever wiped away!



## LECTURE IX.

### SLAVERY.

#### MATTHEW XVI. III.

##### CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

THE last "sign of the times" which was passed in review by us, was "the spirit of fanaticism." By this was understood, "a tendency to carry every thing with which we have any thing to do to extremes, or beyond their just and proper bounds." And this we have shown to have arisen partly, from viewing objects or subjects singly and alone, and dwelling upon them till our imagination magnified them into supreme importance. And partly from that restlessness of spirit by which the present age has been characterized and illustrated. Its rise was connected with the religious and political movements of the last century.

The subject was considered—1st. As it has manifested itself in the various departments of business and gain. 2d. With respect to the temperance cause. 3d. With respect to hu-

man rights, as illustrated by the "Peace" and "Anti-Slavery Societies." And 4th, its influence on the interests of religion. That such a spirit existed, and was exercising an extensive and deleterious influence on every subject and interest with which it had commingled itself, was proved and illustrated. It was also shown that it was the duty of all who loved their country; and all who took an interest in the preservation of truth and order, and the welfare of our race, to watch against the influence of this spirit. If it is permitted to prevail, it will sweep away every thing which is valuable in the civil institutions of our country, destroy the hopes which the friends of civil liberty have entertained concerning the experiment which *we* are now making on the subject, fulfil the predictions of its enemies, and overturn some of the fairest hopes of the friends of religion. From this it results that the friends of truth and order should possess their souls in patience, guard against the influence of this spirit, and when this enemy comes in like a flood, pray fervently and importunately to Him who has the hearts of all men in his hands, and can turn them at his will, that he may say to the waves of this raging flood—thus far shall ye come and no farther. Our ultimate hope must be in God. Men may raise this spirit,

but they can neither govern it, nor lay it.  
The

VIII. Sign of the times to which your attention will be directed is one which involves the interest of our beloved country to a greater extent than any one which we have as yet contemplated. How we can avoid looking at it, and feeling with respect to it the deepest solicitude, it is difficult to conjecture. I allude to the subject of *Slavery*—a subject which has deeply agitated the public mind, and which, in one way or other, mingles itself with the dearest interests of our beloved country. It is a subject which requires the wisest and calmest consideration, on which, if men take counsel of their passions, they will be sure to be led astray, and be in danger of producing results which they will be sure to regret, but cannot change. No man who is reckless of consequences, who is not capable of weighing with wise caution the probable effects which important causes are likely to produce in such a country as ours, who is not well acquainted with the character of the American people, the nature of our civil institutions, the relations which the various parts of our country sustain to each other, and the duties which arise out of them; who does not sincerely love his country, who does not possess a meek and quiet

spirit, or who is not in a good degree capable of governing his own spirit, should suffer himself to agitate such a subject at such a time.

I may be asked, why call it up? Not simply because it is a sign of the times, and a portentous and agitating one too, but from the very difficulties and dangers by which it is surrounded, to induce, persuade, and beseech my countrymen, and especially the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus, to give it that calm, deliberate, and prayerful consideration which its high importance demands. The interests which are involved in it are neither few nor small. They will be found to bear with tremendous weight on all our institutions, civil and religious, and on the eternal welfare of millions of immortal souls. There are difficulties connected with this subject, my hearers, from which nothing but the wisdom and grace of God can deliver us. And these difficulties have for the last few years been increasing upon us at a most fearful and appalling rate.

Pity and sympathy for the African race are not of recent date in our country. Before the men who, for the last five or six years, have figured the most prominently in their behalf, were known to think or feel on the subject, there were philanthropists and Christians who not only felt and prayed for this unhappy race

of men, but were silently and efficiently exerting themselves to benefit them, with a prospect and hope which I fear will not exist again for a long time to come. I wish my hearers to listen to, and remember, what I am about saying. These men believed themselves to have received in good faith from the prominent public men of the South, a satisfactory assurance of the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, by the action of Congress at a specified time then near at hand; and I have no doubt the plan would have been carried into effect, but for the alarm occasioned by the sudden rush, and intemperate and abusive publications made at the time, by those who now claim to be the exclusive friends of the cause. This I fully believe. Nay, I know the prominent actors in it, and have good reason to believe that they would have been successful in it.

At the same time also, Virginia and Maryland were prepared to have passed laws which would have terminated slavery in those States during the present generation; and Kentucky and Missouri would have followed the example, if they had not led the way, for public sentiment in the latter State was so nearly equally balanced, that a feather would have turned the scale in favour of emancipation. In that case,

North Carolina and Tennessee could scarcely have failed to follow the example soon. This would have given a prodigious preponderance, both moral and political, to the non-slaveholding States, which would at once have hindered the introduction of slavery into any new States which might have been formed, and probably have insured its extinguishment in the remaining States within a comparatively short period. I thus judge from the facts, that many in those States were beginning to look upon it as a moral evil from which it was necessary to be delivered, and from which they were devising means to deliver themselves. Is it not reasonable to suppose, that with such feelings on the subject, they would have sought and found facilities of emancipation, and that with perfect freedom to speak and write on the subject, such sentiments would have diffused themselves widely? This would especially have been the case, if, as is believed, this sentiment is connected with the religious principle.

This promising state of things, however, unhappily, no longer exists. The prospect which appeared to be opening before us, no longer presents the same aspect. Dark and gloomy clouds have gathered over it, and whether they will be dissipated, or grow darker, and burst in a tempest, is known only to Him who knows the end

from the beginning, has the hearts of all men in his hand, and can turn them, even as the rivers of water. The subject is of such importance as to commend itself to the serious and prayerful regard of every friend of God and his country. Look at it, and judge for yourselves whether we attach too much importance to it.

Our country probably contains about sixteen millions of inhabitants. Our rise and progress have been wonderful. God has given us a noble land. He has exercised over us a benign and gracious providence. He has bestowed upon us the happiest institutions, and accommodated them to our circumstances—and we have reason to say, “He hath not dealt so with any people.” In an evil hour, our mother country introduced slavery among us, I believe I may say, against the will of our fathers. We had it on our hands at the Revolution. It has, unfortunately, been perpetuated, though not in unison with our institutions; and it has grown with our growth to its present magnitude. There are, probably, now in our country, well nigh three millions of Africans or their descendants, more than two millions of whom are in a state of involuntary servitude. Nearly all the slaves, and a very considerable proportion of those who are free, are

entirely destitute of education, and, to a very great extent, destitute also of the appliances of religion.

The slaves of course are destitute of property, and cannot legally hold any. Nor have they any direct interest in the institutions of our country. Comparatively few of those who are free, are possessed of property enough to render their earthly circumstances comfortable. In several of the States, they are deprived of the common rights of citizenship, and where this is not the case, they cannot exercise it with facility and comfort. In addition to this, they are without many of the incentives to improvement and well-doing which are common to the rest of the inhabitants of our country. They have scarcely any facilities for acquiring any thing more than a common-school education; and if they had, they are almost shut out from any sphere in which they could exercise an improved intellect. It is a very rare thing to find one of them in the medical profession; with that of the law they never meddle; and few of them are ministers of the Gospel. Nor is there a civil office of profit or trust which is open to them. Such, too, is the state of society, that in no part of our land can they enter into the social relations upon that footing of equality, which gives to those relations their



highest charm, and makes them so productive of comfort and elevation.

This is the case with those of them who are free, and more strikingly so with those who are in a state of slavery; and, if they were emancipated, it would still be so. This state of things exists, whatever be its cause, and experience and observation teach us, that it will be no light or easy thing to produce a change. You may call it a prejudice, or a sin—such are its practical influence and force that it will not be easily removed, and, certainly, not by calling it by hard names.

There exist, then, in our land, two distinct races of men, who do not differ from each other more widely in their colour, than they do in their circumstances—and these are of no common importance. One of them, has very little interest in the institutions of our country; and the great body of them are illy qualified to enjoy them. We have already seen, that even those of them who are free lack many of the inducements and facilities to well-doing, and elevation in the intellectual and social scale, which are common to the whole white race. With those who are in a state of slavery, these facilities and inducements are still less. They are aliens in the land in which they dwell,

and feel themselves to be, for a long time to come, in a state of degradation, recovery from which will be a very difficult thing.

Those of them who are free, very naturally desire to be placed, in every respect, on a footing of perfect equality with the whites; and those who are in a state of slavery, as naturally desire to enjoy freedom; and, if they believe that these immunities are improperly or unjustly withheld from them, the desire will be greatly increased, and not improbably connected with impatient and exacerbated feelings.

We have, then, in the midst of us, nearly three millions of people, who are aliens to the remaining twelve or thirteen millions, the body of whom are destitute of property, of education, and of civil rights; who have received very little moral culture; who have been brought up in such a state of dependence as never to have relied upon their own resources or exertions for support, and therefore are as ignorant as children, of that practical economy so necessary to conduct, advantageously, the most ordinary concerns of life, nor less ignorant of the nature and operation of our civil and political institutions. The man, who can see no difficulties and dangers in this state of things, deeply affecting the interest and welfare

of our beloved country, has very little claim to discernment—has viewed the subject through a very deceptive medium.

What can be done to relieve the subject of its distressing aspects? Say some, raise the free at once to a perfect social and civil equality. This is easily said, but not so easily done. Such is the state of society, that it will require a long time, and great changes in public sentiment, before their most sanguine friends can hope to see them mingling, freely and equally, in the civil and political affairs of our country. Whatever may have given rise to the sentiment which excludes them, it exists; and observation proves, that it will not be easily changed. You may call it an unreasonable prejudice. But prejudices are not often easily overcome. Call it, if you please, a sin. It is frequently a difficult thing to bring men to repentance. It will be still more difficult, to change their social relations. Were it practically attempted, those who made the attempt, instead of elevating them, would degrade themselves. The subject has more difficulties connected with it than enthusiasts have ever imagined. It will require many a cogent argument, and many a persuasive plea, to produce the desired change. The modest, unobtrusive

demeanour, and continued practical well-doing of the coloured race themselves, will go farther towards changing public sentiment in their favour, and raising them in society, than all the laboured arguments, and angry, vituperative harangues of their—so called—friends, whose past efforts, I fear, have done them any thing but good. They mistake human nature. You cannot dragoon voluntary agents into kindly feeling or right action.

The great difficulty, however, is found in the case of those who are still in a state of bondage. However desirable their emancipation may be, the case is surrounded with difficulties which it will not be easy to remove. The case cannot be touched by the General Government. The right of holding slaves is guaranteed to the States by the Constitution, and an attempt to touch it, even by the constitutional mode of changing its provisions, would dissolve the Union into its elements, and blast the hopes which its establishment has raised. It would be almost a hopeless thing, at present, to procure an enactment, in any of the slaveholding States, which would give them a remote prospect of freedom, or even to permit individuals to emancipate them without an immediate removal from the country—and cir-

cumstances have well nigh led them to shut themselves out from the exercise of any influence by which a change might be produced.

But if these things were not so, still the case has difficulties of great magnitude connected with it, which are calculated deeply to affect the heart of the warmest friend of the race. Suppose their bonds were loosed this day!—that every one of them were to go out free! How would that affect them, and the community? It would add two millions more to the number of those who would be obliged to provide for themselves, all of them without property, or education, or moral culture, or providence, or economy; and many of them, too, aged and infirm, or too young, to contribute to their own support; principally located in a part of the country where they would find it much more difficult to elevate themselves, than in portions of the land where slavery does not exist. It would take several generations, before any considerable portion of them could be expected to raise themselves to any thing like an equality with the whites, in point of property or education; and it would probably be longer still before the whites, having the power of the law in their own hands, would consent to raise them to a civil and political equality with themselves. On all these accounts, there

would be a very great lack of means, as well as inducements, for the improvement of their state and worldly circumstances, which would necessarily prolong the season of their probation and advancement—connected with heart-burnings, jealousies, and discontents, as well as much actual suffering from poverty and want, some of it arising unavoidably from their circumstances, and no small part of it from idleness and improvidence. The experiment, if it were tried, even under the most favourable circumstances, would prove, that the difficulties of the case are not imaginary. Skeptics may enlighten themselves on the subject, if they will attentively study the moral and natural statistics of any of our large cities, where the people of colour are collected together in large numbers, or, who will walk our streets with an observant eye. It is a remarkable and instructive fact, that in places inhabited by whites, slaves, and free people of colour, the proportion of deaths is several per cent. greater among the free blacks than either among the whites or the slaves. The facts which I have mentioned, I have no doubt, furnish the solution.

I mention these things, not as an argument against their emancipation, for I heartily desire it; nor, as being friendly to slavery, for I think it a very great evil, and not the least so to the

whites who live in the midst of it—but to show, to those who are driving at the object, without any regard to means or consequences, that the subject is not free from great difficulties, even in the most favourable light in which it can be placed. The difficulties of the case would be greatly increased, whenever their number should approximate that of the whites.

Nor is the problem of easy solution as it regards the whites. The effect on them cannot be small. The change on their part will be great with respect to all who have passed the season of infancy. It will affect very seriously all the habits of their lives, as well as their worldly circumstances. It will change their domestic and social relations, and will have no small influence on what they have been in the habit of esteeming their comforts. These, however, are things which some either entirely overlook, or totally disregard. They consider the slave-holder, no matter how he became so, or what his character in other respects may be, no better than a wild beast, who may be hunted from society, or a demon incarnate, of whom nothing but evil should be spoken. With such views, it would be no wonder if any interest which they may be supposed to have in the subject, should be left entirely out of the question. And yet, so esteeming and treating them, they

professedly think it strange that they cannot bring them into their views by such means of conviction and persuasion! Yet, they must be considered in connexion with the subject, and they will be, unless the change is to be brought about by the power of the sword. Their interest and welfare are as fully and equitably entitled to consideration in the settlement of this question, as the other party. It would be as unjust to disregard them, as the most ardent abolitionist thinks it to hold a fellow creature in involuntary bondage.

It is presumed to be evident that this subject is surrounded with practical difficulties on every side, in whatever light it may be viewed. However easy some men may think it to cut the knot, men of sober thought, and deep reflection, do not find it so easy a matter to untie it. With as ardent a love of country, as kindly and sympathetic feelings for the slaves, and as high a regard for holiness and the divine will as revealed in the Sacred Scriptures, they cannot contemplate this subject without perplexity and alarm; and these grow upon them the more closely they contemplate it in the light cast upon it by the aspects of the times.

What then are its present aspects? There are at least two millions of bondmen in our country. Their condition is anomalous to our



institutions. They are degraded by bondage, poverty, ignorance, and public sentiment. They are unqualified to enjoy our institutions, at present, even if they were free. Circumstances are unfavourable to their elevation to an equality in the social and political scale. They no doubt feel their degradation, and anxiously desire to possess the privileges of which they are destitute. The whole number of their race among us is about one-fifth of our population. Those who are free are far from an equality with the whites in advantages and privileges. They all feel it, and desire a change; for who desires not to have his lot bettered?

Look next at the whites. A large majority of the American people believe slavery to be a very great moral and political evil. They sincerely wish that it never had existed in our country, and that we might be entirely freed from it. But when *they* came on the stage of action, they not only found it in existence, incorporated with the domestic relations of a large part of our country, as it then was, but identified with the great bond of our political union, and dependent for its continuance on the action of the individual States. And they have seen it grow up to so enormous a magnitude, that they know not how to abate or remove it. They see evil and difficulty attending every

view they can take of the subject; and they tremble with anxiety when they look at it.

Not so another portion of the American people. They not only look at it as a great moral and political evil, the aspects of which are darkly frowning upon our country, but as the evil of all evils, and the sin of all sins, and therefore to be given up at once and for ever, no matter what consequences may flow from it. And hence no man connected with it, say they, shall be a minister of the Gospel, or a member of the Church of Christ, till he hath washed his hands clean of it; or in other words, that it is such a damnable heresy as to exclude a man from the kingdom of heaven, for whatever rightfully excludes a man from the visible Church, if not sincerely repented of, excludes from the more holy society of heaven. These principles are attempted to be carried out by enlisting the periodical press as extensively as possible in the cause, by the dissemination of pamphlets and books, by public meetings of various kinds, by the employment of agents, and especially public lecturers in great numbers, by flooding the national legislature with memorials from session to session, and by the action of ecclesiastical assemblies and churches.

The effect of all this has been to rouse the attention and call into exercise the angry feel-

ings of the inhabitants of the slave-holding States; to shut out from among them all persons and publications differing from the sentiments which they hold on the subject; to treat with abuse, and in some instances with lawless personal violence, those whom they have suspected of coming among them with designs hostile to slavery; to deprive the slaves of the means of instruction afforded by Sabbath-schools, and of the Gospel itself, lest they should become more desirous of liberty, and better able to assert it; to increase and fortify public sentiment in favour of slavery, and to postpone the hope of its abrogation. The question has also mingled itself with the politics of the country, excited and increased sectional prejudices and difficulties, distracted our public councils, and may endanger the peace and union of the States.

The wise and good contemplate this state of things, not only with feelings of awe and solemnity, but with fear and trembling. And they feel the deeper anxiety, when they see Christian men, and Christian ministers, under the influence of excited feelings, and reckless of consequences, rushing headlong, where angels would feel obliged to tread with caution. To them we seem to be standing over a mine which a single spark may cause to explode.

Suppose this fire were kindled, who can tell how deep and broad the conflagration will be? Who will count the slain, or calculate the loss? What interest, civil or religious, will not suffer by it? It will then be too late to mourn our folly. Let the antagonist principles which have for a few years past been arraying themselves against each other, press each other a little harder, and who will avert the explosion?

I have often wondered why God in his providence has suffered two such races of men to be congregated together under such circumstances, in this land. And this has been the conclusion: First—To repay to Africa the wrong we have done her, by the return of at least a portion of her children, laden with the treasures of civilization and religion, to be disseminated through all her dark borders and tribes, that she may be prepared for the day of millennial glory. And hence the colonization cause has my approbation and sympathy. Second—As a test of our good behaviour, in the enjoyment and due improvement of the blessed lot which he has so graciously bestowed upon us, and a rod in his hand to chastise us, if we should abuse our privileges, and not make suitable returns to our gracious benefactor. And this leads me to look with so much anxiety at this sign of the times. When we

think of our cupidity, our worldly mindedness, our lawlessness, our disregard of human life, our early political corruption, our national pride and vanity; and last, though not least, our abuse of religious privileges, and especially our individual and national disregard of God's holy day, who is not obliged to look with fear and trembling at such aspects of providence as that which we have this evening been contemplating?

This subject requires the deepest consideration of the wisest heads, and soundest hearts in our land. And the consideration must not be delayed, for the danger is threatening. Let none think of it as an unimportant matter. The condition of three millions, circumstanced as the African race are in our land, must exercise an important influence on our country for good or evil. They are in an important sense, committed to our care, and we shall not only affect them by our treatment of them, but ourselves also. Their very residence among us affects all our institutions; nor will it be less so in time to come, and may be much greater. The very agitations which are at present connected with the subject, demand it of us to look at it with close and wise attention.

If there be any one thing more important

than all others, to be attended to at present, it is the influence of a wild, reckless spirit, which, regardless of consequences, rushes at its object, as the eagle at its prey. Such a spirit would not be a safe counsellor on such a subject at such a time. A whole community under excited feeling could be easily made to run mad. This evil is not to be thus cured, or the remedy will be worse than the disease. 'This spirit has already done a mischief on this very subject, which it will be no easy thing to cure. I fear it will be long before the subject will again present as favourable an aspect as it did eight years ago.

And if, as there is reason to apprehend, this is one of the rods, in the Lord's hand, to chastise us for our sins; and if there is reason to fear, that he is now holding it over us in a threatening manner, then it becomes us to humble ourselves before him, and return to him, in the attitude of penitents and suppliants. And then we may hope, that he will regard our cry, and remove all our fears. At all events, we shall not be mistaken, if we ask counsel of him. "If any lack wisdom, let him ask of God; who giveth liberally, and upbraideth not."

Perplexed as the whole affair is to human eyes, and little as we may know how to relieve

ourselves from its difficulties, God's eye pierces through the dark cloud, and his hand can, with infinite ease, remove it, and bring us out into the clear sunshine of his favour. "With God, all things are possible," and he has never said to any of his creatures, "seek ye my face in vain." And especially, let it be your fervent prayer and earnest endeavour, that the Church of God may be kept clear from the passions and agitations which men are seeking to connect with the subject. If this be not the case, *the salt itself will lose its savor; and then, wherewith shall it be salted?* There are a multitude of men, connected with this perplexing subject, who have no connexion with the Church of God, and they have no right to ask her to enter into their angry feelings, and do the work which they have undertaken. Her business is, with the souls of men, and their salvation; and she must not descend into this arena, which the sins and follies of men may make one of blood. Into such counsels the Church must not come. Let her say to them, as Nehemiah said to Sanballat, "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?"

Let all look at this subject, wisely, calmly, and prayerfully. It is a great and important

subject, which bears with weight upon the welfare of our beloved country, and all its institutions; and in its issues will deeply affect the glory of God, and the best interests of immortal souls. Pray, that the Divine eye may be upon it for good, and the Divine hand direct it to a happy result.



## LECTURE X.

### SPIRIT OF LAWLESSNESS.

MATTHEW XVI. III.

CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

THE last "sign of the times," to which your attention was directed, was the subject of "Slavery." My object was, to show that it is a subject of vast magnitude and importance, involving, to an inconceivable extent, the dearest interests of our beloved country. The difficulties and dangers connected with it, were attempted to be illustrated, by the number of the African race, free and in bondage, which existed in our country; the relation in which the two races, who dwell together in our land, stand to each other; the constitutional powerlessness of the General Government, with respect to the subject; the difficulties connected with emancipation, arising from the absolute control of so many independent States over it; the poverty, ignorance, and helplessness of the

African race, both free and slaves; and the attitude in which portions of the whites stand to each other, with respect to the subject of emancipation. From the state of the case, as it existed, it was argued, that the subject should be approached with a great deal of caution, moderation, and practical wisdom, which was the more necessary, because evil passions had already been engendered, which, if not seasonably checked, might kindle a fire which would destroy some of the dearest interests of our highly favoured country, and prove equally deleterious to the welfare of all concerned. And especially, that we should commend our beloved country, and its interests, to the holy keeping and benediction of God, and seek from *him* that wisdom which may be necessary to guide us through the perplexities and dangers by which the subject is surrounded. Let it be deeply impressed upon all our minds, (I would I could impress it upon every American mind and heart,) that, what Jehovah has graciously bestowed upon us, as the collected wisdom of the fathers of our country, may not be destroyed by the folly, madness, or wickedness of a few, or, even of an individual. The erection of a splendid edifice would require the wisdom of many and noble minds, and the labour of many and powerful hands, while a torch, in the

hand of a foolish or wicked incendiary, would suffice to reduce it to ashes.

All the dangers, however, by which our country is threatened, are not bound up in this single subject. The times present to our view other signs, which it will be our interest to observe and study. A number of them have already, on former occasions, been called up. The

IX. In order, and which will this evening claim your attention, is—The spirit of lawlessness, which has, on a number of occasions, manifested itself, to the great detriment of the community, and with manifest danger to our institutions. If there be a country on earth, where the rigid maintenance of law and order is more necessary than in any other, ours is that country. Such is our state, that every thing among us is affected by public sentiment.

We have, indeed, an admirable Constitution. I have no doubt, that a benign and gracious Providence watched over, and directed its formation. The fathers of that instrument had not forgotten the vicissitudes and trials of the Revolution; the fervency with which the Divine protection and help had been implored; and the many interpositions and deliverances which had been experienced, in seasons of

deep gloom and threatening dangers, and felt anxious, ere they should be called away, to remedy the defects of an imperfect confederation, which kept us together by the force of the circumstances of danger and difficulty in which the country was involved, but was found to be totally inadequate to keep us together, so as to enable us to repair the injuries received in the Revolutionary contest, unite us as one people, and form us into a harmonious and happy nation, in a state of peace and prosperity. Hence their earnest, and, through the Divine blessing, successful endeavour, at so early a period, to form the Constitution, under which we still live. Nor was it a work of easy accomplishment. There were many interests to be consulted; and many difficulties, which, at the time, were feared to be of an appalling and almost insuperable nature, to be overcome—and, but for the blessing of God upon the exertions of Washington and his compeers, who threw the whole weight of their characters, as men and patriots, with all the love and gratitude which was felt for them on account of their Revolutionary services and sacrifices, into the scale, would probably never have been overcome. They did, however succeed, beyond their own most sanguine hopes, and have left us a form of government which, while it has

elicited the admiration of the wise and good throughout the world, has eminently promoted our welfare as a nation.

This Constitution has been the safeguard of the State governments which existed before it, and the model of those which have been subsequently formed. And not only so, but it has given direction and character to the whole course of our legislation both in the general and State governments. The consequence has been, that the general character of our legislation has been wise and salutary, adapted to the circumstances of the people, and calculated to promote general welfare and individual happiness. And just as long as the people desire such legislation, they can command it—for if their representatives should enact unconstitutional laws, their courts can so declare them, and thus render them inoperative, or the people themselves can speedily rectify the evil, by choosing other representatives, and thus procure their repeal, before any lasting or wide spread mischief could be wrought. The people of this country, have, under God, not only their laws, but their constitutions also, in their own power, and can change them at their pleasure. So that, if they are not good in themselves, or suited to their circumstances, they can modify or change them in any way

they may see fit. Under these circumstances, our constitutions and laws will be types of the character of the American people. If our civil and political institutions are not what they ought to be, the blame must rest upon ourselves. And so also with respect to their administration, for no public servant can hold an office long against the will of the people. Those of them who cannot be reached by the ballot boxes, may, by impeachment or indictment. No man can hold it out long against public sentiment.

Let it, however, be observed, and constantly borne in mind, that the administration of the whole system depends on that sentiment. However wise and good our constitutions and laws, and however able and upright our rulers in every department of trust, the execution of law, and the preservation of order, will depend on the will, and of course on the character, of the people. This is more strikingly the case in our country than in any other on earth. Here the people are their own supreme law. The whole has, under God, emanated from them, and substantially, it periodically reverts into their hands. We neither have, nor can have, a European police, or mercenary soldiery, to dragoon the disorderly into unwilling submission, or coerce the execution of law against

the popular will. The people themselves must be the conservators of the public peace, and they are themselves essentially the executors of the law, for they are the soldiers of the Constitution. Should the popular mind, therefore, become sufficiently perverted to tolerate or desire unwholesome or wicked legislation, or to hinder the execution of good and wholesome laws, there will be no earthly power left to preserve social order, or secure the public welfare. Under such circumstances there would be less security than if both the makers and the executors of the laws were corrupt and wicked—for the bad law may be repealed, and the wicked public servant may be displaced. But if the fountain itself be empoisoned, who will heal the streams? “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

We must be governed by law, or not at all. Every hinderance to the due administration of the law, while it is law, and every perversion of public sentiment which leads to the weakening of the power and supremacy of the law, is a prop removed from under the edifice, which endangers its safety, by weakening its strength. And those who help it on are the instruments or abettors of all the disorder and loss which may be suffered. No man can, with propriety, be esteemed either a good citizen, or a patriot,

much less a Christian, who does not submit himself to the laws of his country while they are in force, and give his influence to maintain their supremacy and execution. Every citizen owes this as a debt to his country, and every good citizen will cheerfully pay it, as well "for conscience, as for wrath's sake."

We may be aiders and abettors of lawlessness and disorder, in a variety of ways. We are perhaps too much in the habit of circumscribing this category. The openly lawless and disobedient, who regard neither God nor man, are not the only ones who belong to it. The open freebooter, the midnight plunderer, and the petty thief, are only modifications of the principle of dishonesty. So the open mobist, who would pull your house down, or burn it over your head; or the man who would by violence hinder the execution of the law, or who would make and execute law by his own authority, under the pretence that its penalty is not sufficiently severe, or its ordinary execution too tardy, are only modifications of lawlessness and disorder. The judge on the bench may so administer the law as to weaken its force, and he cease to be "a terror to evil doers." Or the juror in the box may nullify the law, by refusing to render a verdict of guilty on the clearest evidence, because he



supposes the penalty by which the law is sanctioned, too severe. And so any man may become an enemy of law and order, who, although he will submit himself personally to its control, yet will speak lightly of, or justify the violations of which others are guilty.

Such things can not be too deeply regretted, or too scrupulously avoided, in a country like ours. The law with us must be every thing, or it will be nothing. If one may with impunity burn up a house of infamy, why may not another apply the torch to that of a hated neighbour. The same spirit which influenced the mob of New York to break open a flour store and scatter its contents to the winds, might influence another lawless multitude to break into your banks, and rifle them. And if a whole community could stand by and witness the voluntary conflagration of an edifice, with the erection and use of which they were displeased, without moving a hand to save it, or bring the agents to punishment, who will guaranty the safety of our churches, against the enemies of religion, when their passions become excited against it? Mobs are not choice of the objects of their attack. If they could arrest with their own private hands, and try by the laws of their own minds, and then execute by their own authority the wretched gamblers at Vicks-

burg, they could, with perhaps, as little compunction, and with the same impunity, shoot down a minister of the Gospel at Alton. True, he was an imprudent, perhaps a deluded man, but still a minister of the Gospel, an American citizen, and on every account entitled to the protection of the laws of his country, and to penalties, only as the laws should adjudge and inflict them.

X It is one of the evils of this spirit that it is *lawless*. No man can feel himself safe, even when he is obeying, in all good conscience, every law of his country. He may at the very time be committing some mortal offence, for which he may be called to answer with his life to the next collection of his fellow creatures he may chance to meet in the streets. Another evil is, that it makes the unruly and excited passions of men the judges of right and wrong, and these are commonly not only unjust, but cruel and malignant. They almost always exact more than is just, for passion views every thing through a perverted and false medium. Need I add, as one of the evils which flow from it, the loss of that delightful security which a man feels in every well regulated community, that his property, his reputation, his family, and his life, are all safe under the protection of law, and that he can sit in peace under his own vine and

fig-tree, without any to molest or make afraid. How wretched must that land be, when its inhabitants feel that all they have is at the mercy of lawless violence; who, when they retire in the evening, are obliged to fear that the torch of the incendiary may be applied to their dwelling before the morning dawns; or when they walk forth into the street, are obliged to be afraid lest the next person they shall meet, may prove to be an assassin!

It was a sad day in the land of Israel when the following record characterized its state. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes." You may read an account of the fruit of this lawless state in the 17th, 18th, 20th, and 21st chapters of the book of Judges. It came very near the entire destruction of one of the tribes of Israel. But when did this spirit ever work any thing but evil?

Perhaps it was never more strikingly exhibited and fully illustrated than during the former years of the French Revolution. Then anarchy sat enthroned in the Jacobin Club of Paris, directed or controlled the deliberations and acts of the constituent and national assemblies, roused and pushed forward the mob of that great city in its march of rapine and blood, sent forth its decrees to its affiliated clubs through-

out the nation, changed the French people into a nation of blood-hounds and tigers, subverted all law and order, laid the foundation of Napoleon's iron despotism, and poured itself upon Europe like a stream of burning lava. The habits of ages, the long-cherished respect of that people for the altar and the throne, and the resistance of a brave mercenary soldiery, all gave way before its resistless march as things of naught. Even Napoleon could not stem it till it had spent its force, butchered the great mass of its own children, and an exhausted, and well nigh ruined nation, felt that it would be a blessed relief from such a state, to lie powerless on the bosom of a military despotism. Give us any thing, said the French people, but a state of lawlessness and anarchy! In the comparison, even the continual wars of the Emperor, although they cost millions of lives, the lives of the *elite* of the empire, were preferred, not only because they were connected with foreign conquest and military glory, but they had peace, and in general, security of property and life at home.

How great then would be the sacrifice of the American people, to give up the reign of law and order, with all their blessed fruits, for lawlessness and confusion! What could possibly compensate us for the loss? The liberty which

is irrespective of law and order is "a chimera dire." It exists not as a blessing either in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the dark regions of the damned. My hearers, "order is Heaven's first law," and its violation is rarely, if ever, suffered to pass with impunity. The undue indulgence of our appetites is inconsistent with bodily comfort or health. A penalty is exacted for every act of excess. The indulgence of our passions always affects our minds unhappily. When God made man upon the earth, he at once subjected him to law. In making him a social being, he provided by suitable enactments for his social relations, beginning with the family, and carrying it through the ramifications of society and life. Look at the divine code in the second table of the Law, and see how admirably it is adapted to man as a social being. The family is the first society, and the parents constitute the natural headship. Look how kindly he has provided for the support of the head, the subjection of the members, and the order and comfort of the whole circle! "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." What is a family without the practical influence of this wise and holy precept? And for what society are men fit who have been trained without any regard to it?

In this divine precept God himself has laid the deep, and broad, and strong foundations of social order and happiness. This is the grand social compact of our race, enacted and revealed by God himself, long before Solon, or Lycurgus, or Justinian, or Hampden, or Sydney, or the fathers of our own happy institutions, lived or taught. My hearers, the fire, the holy fire, came down from God out of heaven. Foolish and wicked men borrowed or stole the sacred fire from off his altar, and then refused to acknowledge the obligation. For what good and perfect gifts are we not indebted to the Father of lights?

And how wisely and benignly is this "first commandment with promise" followed up by others, having respect to the same relations, and calculated to secure order and comfort? By the first which follows, he cast about human life the safeguard of the divine protection—"Thou shalt not kill." By the second, he protects the purity, and peace, and comfort of the domestic circle—"Thou shalt not commit adultery." By the third, he makes the fruit of a man's labour available to the support and comfort of himself and his family, while at the same time the rights of all others are equally guarded—"Thou shalt not steal." By the fourth, truth, the foundation of confidence, and the se-

curity of justice and right, is established—“Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.” And the last is designed to kill in the bud, to strangle in the birth, the dishonesty, and fraud, and violence, by which individuals and communities seek to aggrandize themselves at the expense of others, by forbidding the sin of covetousness, which is never satisfied with what it possesses, is grieved at the prosperity of others, desires every thing which it sees, and grasps at every thing which it desires. Thus has God, who is a God of order, and not of confusion, established a system for the government of our race, admirably calculated not only to promote the divine glory, and bind man by the strongest bonds of allegiance to his Maker, but to regulate in the happiest manner his social relations and duties, so as to make them productive of individual happiness and general good.

These principles are essential, not only to the well-being, but to the very existence of society. The wild Arab—the wandering son of Ishmael, whose home is in the dreary desert, “whose hand is against every man, and every man’s hand against him,” is still not without law to himself, or his fellows. It is not written on parchment, nor printed in a book, nor engraven on stone or metal. But still, it is *his*

law, and he governs himself by it; and his rights and enjoyments, be they many or few, be they great or small, are protected and secured. And were it not so, he would soon be as lone as wild. Even robbers, who are banded together for spoil, and live in the constant breach of the laws of their country, have their own laws and officers, to which they render obedience. There is law, as well as "honour among thieves." All society must have its bonds; and these bonds must be suited to the state of that society, in order to ensure its welfare. When population is dense, active, and refined, intercourse frequent, mutual interests many and important, it will not only require many laws to regulate its concerns, but the most strict and orderly observance of them, or constant collision will be the consequence. This will especially be the case, where both the enactment and execution of the law are in the hands of the society itself; or, in other words, dependent on public sentiment. All communities, and especially those who possess free institutions, have an interest in the preservation of law and order, in the exact proportion of the immunities and privileges which they enjoy under them. Let the sacred shield of law be once removed from over their heads, and what is to secure them in the enjoyment of



them? This is eminently the case, as has already been remarked, in our own country. The law is, under God, the palladium of our rights, and of our enjoyments. When the laws shall die, or be reduced to silence, our liberties will die, and so will our prosperity, our national and individual happiness, and our religion—all our dearest interests and hopes.

And are we in no danger? Have the whole body of the American people that high and sacred regard for law and order, which their supreme importance demands from a people who profess to be, and should be, jealous of every encroachment and danger which may threaten the integrity, and permanency of our free and happy institutions—and the free operation of our equal and wholesome laws, which award to every man his inestimable rights and privileges? Is their language, touch these, and you touch the apple of mine eye? Do they feel all that fear, and exercise all that vigilance, which a subject of such dread importance demands at their hands?

Alas! that the “signs of the times” should oblige us to answer these interrogatories in the negative! There are too many proofs of the existence, not only, but of the tolerance of this evil. Do you ask, where are they to be found? and of what they do consist? Are there not

thousands of the American people, who go continually armed with pistol, dirk, or Bowie-knife? not only on journies, and when they may perhaps be thought necessary to guard property, but every where, and on all occasions. That they are not carried out of mere show or fashion, is manifest from the fact that they are often used, and used to deadly purpose; not only in defence, but in offence. The victims may be counted by hundreds. Do they go armed in vain? Do they not intend to assault, or expect to be assaulted? If this be not a crying evil, why has the subject been agitated in legislative halls, and, in some instances, given rise to legal enactments, with high penalties? Can a spirit be more lawless than this? Here is a private citizen, who not only forms a definite opinion concerning all private offences, but sits as judge in his own case, and, for an offence so slight that the eye of the law cannot discern it, breaks the peace of society, takes the life of a fellow creature, and sends an immortal soul to the judgment, without time or ability to shed a tear of penitence, or an opportunity to apply for mercy, through the blood of atonement. The law condemns it as a heinous crime: And what comes of it? A brief inquiry—perhaps a recognisance—and, almost invariably, an ac-

quittal. Could these things be, and public sentiment not justify them? Is this lawlessness, or is it not? Does it endanger our institutions, or does it not? What if all were thus to arm themselves? I tremble for my country. If any of you, my hearers, carry about with you these instruments of death, disencumber yourselves of them at once, and forever—for you may be bearing about with you the instrument of a double destruction, the very temptation by which you may be luring your own soul to the pit.

Another proof that a lawless spirit is abroad in the land, is found in the practice of duelling; a practice which nothing can justify or palliate. It is anti-social, barbarous, unjust, cruel, revengeful, and at war with every principle of law, human and divine, which regards the life of man. Many have been its victims, sad its results. It made Alexander Hamilton a fool, and Aaron Burr a murderer, a wandering vagabond in the earth. O, how must he have felt when he wrote, what I have myself read in his own hand-writing: “Since that sad event, by which I have severed myself from all mankind, I have been alike incapable of giving or receiving consolation!” Perhaps enough has been said on the melancholy subject on a former occasion. Many practice it—more justify

it—and more still tolerate it;—and therefore, lawless as it is, and dangerous to our institutions, the more is it to be deprecated. Let me beseech those, if any such be present, who are in danger of being tempted to sacrifice to this bloody Moloch, to pause while the yawning gulf is still at a distance, ere they make the fatal plunge, and reflect on the language of Aaron Burr, and look to the judgment seat of Jesus Christ!

Need I add, that mobs are awful proofs of lawlessness and disorder wherever they exist, and for whatever purposes they may be gotten up. As nothing can justify them, so nothing should ever induce a member of any American community to engage in them, or speak well of them. If they are ever made the means of rectifying one abuse, they occasion many. If they are ever brought to bear for the punishment of one crime, they have been the fruitful source of thousands. They who use them, put firebrands into the hands of madmen, and may kindle a conflagration which may burn till it shall have consumed every pleasant, good, or holy thing within its destructive range. Mobs have neither understandings nor hearts. They are all passion and fury—and if there be any exception to the rule, it is so much the worse, for it denotes the absence of all good principle.

Let that man tremble, who can find it in his heart to justify a mob for doing what may be confessedly good, if it had been lawfully done; for, upon his own principles, he stands exposed to retribution in kind, be it never so unrighteous, and the justification of the wicked man will be, I was only following in the track of your lawless example, having as perfect a right to be my own judge and executioner as yourself. Against you, at all events, the plea would be perfectly conclusive. The fact is, mobs are always, and necessarily, unlawful and lawless, and therefore wicked. It is an established maxim in all law, divine as well as human, that the end cannot justify the means; so that he who does evil that good may come, is justly condemned.

Unhappily for us, these lawless and dangerous combinations have become too common in our land, and are therefore the more deeply and fervently to be deprecated. The more numerous they are, the greater is the danger that they may supersede all law, and vacate all order. Our institutions will not long bear them. Woe betide us when mobs become the *panacea* for our moral or political disorders. If a remedy at all, they are a desperate remedy for any disorder which is not in its own nature mortal. They have already been the fruitful

source of many evils, and if no remedy of sufficient virtue be found and applied, the time may come, may the Lord avert it, when the best disposed and most virtuous of the citizens of our now free and happy land, may find the iron sceptre of some home-bred Napoleon a relief from the tyranny, anarchy, and destructive power of mobs. The phrase, "any law, rather than mob law," has well nigh the sententiousness and force of a maxim. Under such a rule, or rather *misrule*, what interest or comfort is secure? If a mob demolished the Bastille, a prison of State, it has also demolished many a Christian temple. If it has dethroned a few tyrants, it has raised up many. I may be too apprehensive on the subject, God grant it may be found so, but I am fearful of their multiplication and influence.

The exciting causes of the spirit of *misrule*, seem to me to be numerous and various. I do not design, however, at this late hour, to go into any lengthened detail on the subject. Among these, I think, may be set down as one, the very exuberance of our freedom. Our institutions impose so little restraint upon us that we scarcely feel it, and consequently, on the one hand, are very much disposed to act as if there were none; and on the other hand, when the yoke presses a little, to feel restive and un-

easy under it, and desirous of shaking it off entirely. Then again, the spirit of freedom is apt to beget the spirit of pride. Such is the majesty of freedom, that the simple citizen feels himself to be a kind of little king in his sphere, and as the king can do no wrong, he feels very much disposed to act as he pleases in all things.

Nor do I doubt, that one cause may be found in the exciting manner in which the subject of politics is frequently brought to bear on a portion of community. Every thing is seen through a distorted medium, and therefore, is not seen in its true character and just proportions. Political opponents are rarely allowed to be good men, or to possess any estimable qualities. Invidious distinctions are made, and the parties excited against each other, as though they were natural and irreconcilable enemies. Nor are appeals to the worst passions of our nature, and the basest motives by which the hearts of men can be influenced, uncommon. I am speaking of no party; but of what causes the wise and good of all parties to feel great heaviness of heart, and to be exercised by awful apprehensions for their country. I refer to the politician by trade, who panders to the worst passions of men, and lives upon the public spoils. These set the ball in mo-

tion, and it may well be, that wiser and better men may be unable to arrest its course. These kindle a fire, which, if it continue and spread, a flood may not suffice to quench. Here is one of the dangers which, while it too frequently disturbs our peace and order, endangers the ultimate safety of our institutions. Who will stem this flood for us? who guide the vessel through this narrow, dangerous strait?

But finally: *The cause of causes* may be found in the absence of a deep, settled conviction, that God has laid the foundation of social order, and of society itself, in the fifth precept of the Decalogue, connected with its practical influence, arising from early moral training and discipline. This is the precept: "Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." I have already remarked, in another part of this discourse, that this is the foundation which God has laid for the social edifice, and, that nothing but its principles can bind its parts together. It unfortunately happens, that comparatively few in our country build on this foundation, or adopt its principle. Even if the attention of the child or youth be directed to it, how rarely does the parent expand it, and apply its principle, as of Divine authority, to the relations of society and civil



government! and perhaps more rarely still, insist upon its practical application in the domestic circle, particularly as a divine enactment, which binds the conscience, as well as directs the life.

Few of our American youth enter upon the stage of action, and assume the civil and political relations, fully indoctrinated in the principles of this precept, and already habituated to the practice which it inculcates, and, consequently, not fully able to appreciate the supreme importance of law and order to the being, and well being of society. Let the whole mass of the young be thus trained, and you would have a society as stable as the everlasting hills; for, says the Lord, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

This, is the conclusion of the whole matter. There is a tendency, in our whole civil and political system, to deterioration, administered, as it must necessarily be, by sinful, selfish man, for the government of those like himself. We already reap some of its bitter fruits, and are in danger of reaping more. The principles of the divine law lay the only solid foundation for permanent and happy civil institutions, especially those which contain most of the principles of civil liberty and self-government; and, that

they can be maintained in that health and vigour which will make them productive of the greatest good, only by a large infusion of that holiness which exalteth a nation. And, that it is the wisdom and the duty of the American people, to cultivate those principles which, through the Divine blessing, may give the greatest permanency and efficiency to our happy institutions, and make them blessings to the latest posterity. May God, of infinite mercy, conduct to such results; and to his name, in Christ, shall be all the praise for ever.

## LECTURE XI.

### DEALINGS OF PROVIDENCE.

#### MATTHEW XVI. III.

##### CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

THE last “sign of the times” to which your attention was directed, was—“That spirit of lawlessness which has, for a number of years, from time to time, broken out, and endangered or disturbed the peace of the community.” The importance of law and order to the welfare of a country, where the very execution of the law depends upon public sentiment, was endeavoured to be established and enforced. The inconsistency of duelling; the wearing, and use of deadly weapons by individuals; and the action of mobs, with the peace and welfare of society, were particularly insisted on, because they raise the will and passions of individuals above the law of the land, involving the monstrous injustice of making every man his own lawgiver, judge, and executioner, however dis-

qualified by ignorance, self-interest, or passion. A number of remarks were also made, on the fact, that God had formed our race with social, as well as intelligent natures; and that, while he had thus fitted us to dwell together in communities, he had enacted a law which was admirably calculated to regulate our social relations, and make them productive of general and individual happiness. This was attempted to be illustrated, by the second table of the Decalogue; in which it was supposed that God had laid the foundation of all civil government in the family, by clothing the parents with all the necessary authority to exercise government, and laid the child under moral obligation, not only to submit to that authority when it should exact obedience, but to hold it in such honour as to make that obedience easy and pleasant. This, it was shown, would form the young to habits of order and obedience to law, and lay a solid foundation for the peace and order of larger communities. The connexion of the remaining precepts of the Decalogue, was also exhibited, as illustrating the interest which the Lord takes in the welfare of our race. There might have been added, the happy influence of true religion, in establishing and confirming the order and happiness of society, for, whatever binds man in

allegiance to God, will make him willingly and conscientiously subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake.

The great object had in view, in the whole discussion, was, to show how utterly inconsistent a spirit of lawlessness and disorder was with the stability of our institutions, and the prosperity and happiness of our country. Nor are *we alone* involved in the issue. A grand experiment on free institutions is performing in this western world, under fairer auspices than have ever before existed, and the eyes of the world are directed to us. If we fail, as fail we must, if our liberty becomes licentiousness, the hand on the dial will go many degrees backward, and the renovation of the civil institutions of the world, be long, if not indefinitely postponed. Shall we bring this guilt upon ourselves? and this blighting upon the world's hopes? We shall, most assuredly, if we prove an irreligious and lawless people. It may perhaps be profitable, if we now turn our attention, as the

X. Sign of the times, *to the nature and design of some of the dealings of Providence with us as a nation, for a few years past.*

I trust a review of some of the divine dispensations towards our country may be both interesting and instructive. The age in which we

live, the state of the world, the character of our population and institutions, the position which we occupy among the nations of the earth, the attention which is fixed upon us, and the probable influence which we shall exercise on the destinies of the world, render it very probable that God's dealings with us partake of a highly interesting and special character. And if so, they may well be studied with deep attention and thrilling interest.

Those of my hearers who have honoured me with their attention from month to month while attempting to illustrate and improve "the signs of the times," will recollect that our beloved country has been frequently spoken of as peculiarly favoured and blessed of God. This is true with respect to the whole range of our history. The study of it would be calculated to improve both the minds and the hearts of those who should regard it as connected with the moral government of God. And in this light it should be regarded, for God is the Governor among the nations. The range which I purpose to take is not of this extended character. It is comprehended within the circle of a few years. But the events are neither few, nor small, nor unimportant; and if some of them are not recalled to the mind by a simple reference, even without naming them, it is a sure sign that

we have not been suitably affected by them. This alone would be a good reason to call them up again, form them into a group, direct attention to them, give them a more permanent place in the mind, and endeavour to derive from them the practical instruction which they are calculated to afford. My observations shall be confined to the events of the last seven years. I commence with the year 1832.

A disease which has received the name of "The Asiatic Cholera," has for a long time been known and dreaded in the East Indies. Its range has there been wide and destructive. It was supposed to be peculiar to that climate. A few years before the time I have named, it began to take its course westward through the interior of Asia until it reached the confines of the Russian empire, and marched on, contrary to all expectation, through a high northern latitude and cold climate, and entered Europe; and, with various degrees of violence and destructiveness, passed through its various countries and climates. In 1831, perhaps not before the early part of 1832, it reached England, and soon after, France. We heard of it, and some slight degree of alarm was excited. Still, our country was a healthy one, the broad Atlantic rolled its waves between us and Europe, it was not believed to be contagious, it had never been

known to overleap such a barrier as the Atlantic ocean, and a good degree of confidence was felt that we should escape its ravages.

This confidence continued until the beginning of June in the memorable year 1832. Then the tidings arrived that it had broken out at the same time at Quebec and Montreal. In another month it was at New York. And then, how speedily did it march over the land in its length and breadth? It was also experienced in greater or less extent and violence in the two following years. It is not my intention to rehearse its history, or give its statistics. I have neither the time nor the means of doing so at my command. It is enough to remark, that *many* thousands were its victims, that millions felt its effects, that the minds of the greater part of our population were so disturbed and alarmed by it as to be unable to take their daily food with comfort, and few were then unwilling to acknowledge "the finger of God" in it. Nor was the acknowledgment an unreasonable one. A disease so singular in its character, so strange and rapid in its movements, so fatal in its effects, and so well calculated deeply to affect the minds of men, may well be referred to the special providence of God. If God have any thing to do with the affairs of men, and we are divinely told that his judgments are fre-



quently abroad in the earth, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered, why should we doubt the presence of his hand, and the counsel of his will in such a series of divine providences? I will not now inquire either into the *cause* or *object*.

Another striking series of facts may be found in the number of lives which have been lost within the last seven years by shipwreck, and by the burning of vessels at sea, and the destruction of steamboats in a variety of ways, on the rivers and lakes of our country. The catalogue is long and dark, and a detailed rehearsal of their story would be harrowing to the feelings. Who does not think with horror of the destruction of the *Mexico* on Long Island, together with the greater part of her passengers and crew, in the depth of winter. The loss of the unfortunate *Pulaski* on our seaboard, the *Moselle* at Cincinnati, and the *Washington* on Lake Erie, sent a thrill of horror throughout our land. Multitudes of other disasters have occurred connected with the loss of many lives. The recent loss of three of our most splendid packet ships on the coast of England, and the many lives which fell a sacrifice, are still fresh in our memories. How many lives have thus been lost I cannot tell—the number is large. During one season it amounted to a thousand on our

coast in the course of a few months. The aggregate for the last seven years would amount to many thousands. Has the Lord, who guides and governs the elements of nature, as well as the minds of the children of men, had any concern with these affairs? Who, but the downright Atheist, can deny the presence and the hand of God in them?

Look next at the state of property and business in our country during the same period. There has perhaps never been a time in the history of this land, (and the goodness of the Lord has been prolific towards us,) when we enjoyed a state of more high and palmy prosperity, than in the years which immediately preceded 1834. Agriculture, commerce, and manufactures, were rapidly developing our resources. Every thing to which men put their hands seemed to prosper. The wilderness smiled as Eden, and blossomed as the rose, and we said in our self-complacency, "My mountain stands strong, I shall never be moved." During that year, however, it became a matter of painful experience that in that respect the Lord hid his face, and we were troubled. Who does not remember that season of *panic*. One ascribed it to one cause, and another to another. Some supposed it to be necessary, and others factitious. But so far as I recollect, the hand of

God was seldom mentioned in connexion with it. It is, however, very certain that the exchanges of our country became exceedingly deranged, that multitudes were very much embarrassed, that many heavy failures occurred, that there was a great stagnation of business, and that many a golden dream vanished into thin air. It is not doubted that the supposed wealth of our country was diminished by many millions by the operation.

The last month of the succeeding year was rendered memorable, by one of the greatest calamities which our country has ever suffered—the conflagration of more than six hundred dwellings and stores, and the destruction of more than seventeen millions worth of property, in the city of New York. The effects of that calamity are not easily measured, and will not soon be forgotten. The whole land felt it; for, business has connected every part of it with New York. Perhaps the city of Charleston has since suffered in an equal, if not greater proportion, by a similar calamity. Many other cities have subsequently suffered heavy losses in the same way. Twenty millions would not replace the property which has been destroyed in our country by fire, within five years.

I have already adverted to shipwrecks, and

the destruction of steamboats, on the waters of our country, in a variety of ways, as connected with the loss of human life. It is pertinent here to connect these disasters with the destruction of property. I am not in possession of data which would enable me even to approximate the truth in any calculations which I might make on the subject—but no one would be surprised if it were estimated by millions.

The year 1837 is still fresh in your recollection. Many will never forget it. How should they? when so many great houses were smitten with breaches, and so many little ones with clefts; and so many were obliged to cry, with Micah, “Ye have taken away my gods; and what have I more?” Who ever witnessed such a period? House after house fell—failure followed failure, in such rapid succession, that all confidence was destroyed, and almost universal bankruptcy was feared. Thousands were sacrificed to save the last hope of credit. Every succeeding morning’s intelligence was anticipated with a kind of instinctive horror. Men were afraid to ask of each other, the news of the day. Many, in this community, and more in proportion elsewhere, feared, for a length of time, every morning, that their credit, dearer to them than life, would that day

perish—till finally, the banks stopped the payment of specie, and the community doubted, whether one-half of them would ever resume. Never was this description of the Jews, in their calamity, more strikingly resembled than among the business part of the American people: “In the morning thou shalt say, would God it were even! and at even thou shalt say, would God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see!” We were indeed a suffering community; and all our previous pecuniary losses were cast into the shade by those which were induced by this state of things.

We dwell in a widely extended and fertile land, abounding in the fruits of the earth, and, with ordinary cultivation, producing far beyond the necessities of its inhabitants. In this respect it is a land highly favoured of the Lord—in the beautiful language of the Scriptures, “a land flowing with milk and honey.” It has been called, “the poor man’s paradise.” And yet, such have been the aspects of Divine Providence, that for two seasons of the period under review, there was such a deficiency of some of the more important fruits of the earth, as not only to enhance the price of bread-stuffs so much as greatly to embarrass the poor, but,

so as to render the importation of hundreds of thousands of bushels of grain from foreign countries necessary. This, to say the least of it, is a strange thing in the history of our country; and is worthy of the observation of the moralist, as well as the political œconomist.

There is left, in our country, a remnant of the aboriginal inhabitants. They have been widely scattered. We have been frequently embroiled with them. They have often met with hard and provoking treatment; commonly from individuals, or small portions of the community. The Government has, in the main, sought their welfare. But, crowded by our advancing population, they have receded, and melted away. A small tribe, denominated the Seminoles, inhabited Florida. We felt anxious to possess the whole of that Territory. We entered into a treaty with them; to which, the body of the tribe were unwilling to accede. A war was the consequence; which has already endured two years and a half, cost twenty millions of dollars, and more lives than the tribe originally contained; and, almost every week brings us an account of some plantation that has been devastated, and its inhabitants destroyed. But the end is not yet. This, is certainly remarkable. There must be a cause.

Concerning the tribes which our Government is collecting together beyond the Mississippi, I will hazard no conjectures. I have my fears. God grant that they may prove to have been unfounded. Most of these tribes are still rude and uncivilized, and, of course, easily excited, and under the influence of strong feeling. They have been pushed from point to point, with no gentle hand. They are warmly attached to their hunting-grounds, and “the place of their father’s sepulchres.” They feel as if they have had hard measure meted out to them. They feel, as if they have been greatly *wronged*, and *wronged by us*. When we tell them of their treaties, they allege fraud or force in obtaining them. When we speak of their depredations on our frontiers, they reply, we were living peaceably in our cabins, till your people came upon us, and drove off our cattle and horses, and burnt up our cabins, and even slew our women and children, while our braves were at a distance, on our hunting-grounds. They are too often in the right, for our reputation or our good. Is it not to be apprehended, that feelings of revenge may be rankling in their bosoms? that they may be watching some favourable opportunity, when they will bury all the evil feelings they entertain towards each other, and, under the influence of some new prophet, unite their

forces, and pour out their fury on our frontiers; or, that some new wrong, real or imaginary, may rouse them to fury against us? And, if we have really wronged them, would not God plead for them against us! I fear, we have not seen the last of our Indian wars.

There are a number of other topics of scarcely inferior importance, upon which the attentive observer of "the signs of the times," cannot look without feeling a thrill of interest and apprehension, as connected with the welfare of our beloved country—at which I have time only to glance. There is a fearful interest connected with the state of the British provinces to the north and east of us. They are full of the elements of political turmoil. When they are hard pressed they take refuge among *us*. They arm anew for the contest within our borders, supported and encouraged not only by the sympathies, but by the money and arms of Americans, a number of whom have paid the forfeit with their lives, some on the field of battle, and some on the gallows.

The agitations connected with the Maine boundary are scarcely yet allayed. A few weeks ago, one of the states of the Union, bound by a constitution which has committed the whole subject of our foreign relations to the general government, well nigh levied war,



and committed the Union to a contest which might have endured for years, and cost thousands of lives, and millions of money, and whose influence on morals and happiness no man can measure—and yet the body of the American people were but little alarmed at it, and many, I fear, anxiously desired it. If public opinion on the subject of war, be, what I apprehend it to be, we might very easily be hurried into contests, which under the most favourable circumstances are to be greatly deprecated, and might prove very destructive to our dearest interests.

It is not necessary that I should direct your attention again to the difficult, agitating, and alarming subject of slavery, in connexion with the state of public sentiment about it, which to me seems like one of the rods which God is holding over our heads. Nor will I dwell, although it holds a prominent place in the category, on that restless and lawless spirit, which from time to time vents itself in broils and mobs, and which we have reason to fear may mingle itself up with the politics of the day, and in the hands of unprincipled men, be used as an instrument to subvert our happy institutions. The danger is the greater from the consideration, that there is reason to fear that a sufficiently high value is not attached to our

Union and institutions as they exist. We *are what we are, because we are one people.* The value of this cannot be *calculated.* And yet it may be feared there are those who *think* their arithmetic can make the estimate. Believe me, my hearers, that if one link be broken out of that chain, its parts will never be reunited. That any of the American people, and especially any of our prominent public men, can look at the prospect of a probable severance of our Union, no matter for what cause, without shuddering, is to me an indubitable proof, that their minds are destitute of that wisdom, and their hearts of that wholesome feeling, which God will give us while he regards us with favour.

It has appeared from the facts which have passed in review before us this evening, that there are many things which have occurred within the last seven years of our country's history, which are of a striking character, and which, however many are the blessings which have been left to us, would seem to indicate that God has a controversy with us which we ought to regard with reverential interest and to study with devout attention. I am fully aware of the delicacy and danger connected with the study and application of such a subject, remembering the words of Christ concerning those

eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell; "Think ye that these were sinners above all men that dwell in Jerusalem? I tell you, nay; but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." It becomes us to be very humble and modest in the judgments we form on such subjects. It is however, one thing to judge *rashly*, and another to "discern the signs of the times," by the light which God's word casts on his providences. The latter we not only may, but should do.

It is as true that God is the moral governor of the universe, as it is that he is the preserver of his creatures. And while he will have us feel our dependence, and thankfully acknowledge his goodness, he makes it our sacred duty to regard his judgments with awe and reverence. The providences of God towards the children of Israel were very remarkable, and he complains of them that they disregarded them—"Who among you will give ear to this? who will hearken, and hear for the time to come? who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not the Lord, he against whom we have sinned? for they would not walk in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his laws. Therefore he hath poured upon them the fury of his anger, and the strength of battle; and it hath set him on fire round about,

yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." Does it need any proof that God exercised a moral government over that nation? Does not their whole history illustrate the fact? Why have they been dispersed? Why have they been preserved in a separate state for eighteen hundred years, though scattered among all nations? Why are there so many predictions concerning their future glory?

But perhaps it may be said, their case was peculiar. The general principles of the divine government are not peculiar. They embrace all nations, and all time. The government of the whole world has been committed into the hands of Jesus Christ, as the Mediator, between God and men, and the very principle for which I am contending is necessary for the fulfilment of the trust which has been committed into his hands. The hopes of our ruined race are dependent upon it. Hence he is called, "the head over all things to the Church"—"King of kings, and Lord of Lords." "For the kingdom is the Lord's; and he is the governor among the nations."—"Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Be wise, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he

be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." "God is the Judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another." Surely, if the individuals of our race are so under God's controul, that "the very hairs of their head are all numbered," it can scarcely be imagined that He disregards the affairs of rulers and nations, upon the action of whom the welfare of such myriads of individuals depend! Nay; there are good reasons why the moral government of God should bear with more directness upon collective bodies of men, such as communities and nations, than upon individuals.

The individual is justly regarded as responsible in his own individual capacity. He never loses his personal identity. He can always be found, and always reached. If God see fit to mark him by a providential act in this life, it is well. He has a perfect right to do so, and has often done it, as in the cases of Lot's wife, Ananias, Saphyra, and many others. Most can recollect instances in which the providences of God have been so striking as to mark the very sins for which men have been visited. But what, if he see fit to give the notoriously wicked, throughout the whole of their lives, more than their hearts could wish, so that their

cup runneth over, and their eyes stand out with fatness, and then let them depart without bands in their death—adequate retribution in the world of spirits is insured, for the individual, with all his responsibilities, is remitted to the judgment seat of Christ, to receive according to the deeds done in the body. Not so with respect to collective bodies, such as nations. The bonds of nations are dissolved here. Death resolves collective bodies into the elements of which they are composed. They are not known in their collective capacity after this life. If therefore, communities, as such, have exercised a moral influence affecting the declarative glory of God, and the condition of his creatures, and it be proper that God should act towards them in such a way as to illustrate his character and government, there is a moral necessity that he should reach them by the dispensations of his providence while they retain their collective capacity.

This, I apprehend, is the only principle upon which we can account for the dealings of God with nations, and the declarations which we find in the Scriptures, bearing on the subject. When all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth, he destroyed the whole race, excepting Noah and his family. When the inhabitants of Sodom and the neighbouring cities had become

universally corrupt, he overwhelmed them by one stroke. When the nations of Canaan had filled up the measure of their iniquity, he sent the children of Israel to destroy them, and possess their land. And when they apostatized, he visited them with pestilence and famine, or delivered them into the hands of their enemies. Such are the general developments of the moral government of God towards the nations of the earth, and we are in much less danger of mistake in applying these principles to communities, than to individuals.

We are then prepared to say, from the principles which we have deduced from the word of God, and the illustrations furnished by the sacred history of his providences, that when the dealings of Divine Providence in consecutive years are adverse to the prosperity and comfort of a nation, interfering materially with their interests, and frustrating their desires and their hopes, that there is reason to fear that God is pleading a controversy with them, into the ground, of which they are imperiously bound to inquire, and the causes of which they should diligently labour to remove. The eye should be directed to them with close attention and deep interest, to ascertain, if possible, the reason of the controversy which God may have with them. God will hide himself from men

on account of their sins, and return unto them when they humble themselves under his hand and return to him by penitence and prayer. This is his language—"I will go and return to my place till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face." And concerning the diligent study of his dispensations we have this record—"whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." The attention and interest with which men may be induced to regard the Lord's dealings with them is of great importance.

That God takes an interest in the concerns of our country, none but Atheists will venture to deny. Our fathers loved to acknowledge his hand, and refer their cause to him. And who can believe that this people have grown up without his care and blessing! And if he led forth our fathers like a flock, and guided and raised us to such heights of prosperity and glory, why should it be supposed that he has had no concern in the events of later years. If our prosperity have come from him, from what source have our afflictions come? Do they ever come without a cause?

Look again at the events of the last seven years which have passed in review before us. The dreadful cholera, which swept away so



many thousands, in so short a time, and filled the whole land with consternation. The successive embarrassments in the concerns of business and money. The loss of human life by shipwreck and other disasters on our waters. The pecuniary losses which have been suffered by derangement of business, by bankruptcies, by storms at sea, by the destruction of steam-boats by fire and other means, by the conflagration of scores of manufactories, and large portions of some of our cities, by extensive failures of the fruits of the earth, and by the overwhelming floods with which the last winter has passed away—the gloomy subject of slavery, and the feelings which are connected with it, and engendered by it—the lawless and reckless spirit which actuates so many of our countrymen, and which vents itself in broils and mobs, and conflagrations, and murders—the state of the Indian tribes, and the expensive, protracted, and disgraceful war in which we have been engaged with one of the smallest of them. The state of the Canadas, the Maine boundary question, and the feelings of a multitude of the American people with respect to our relations with Great Britain. If God has any concern with these subjects, and I know not how to separate them from the scope and action of his moral government—a govern-

ment which comprehends the army of heaven, and every dweller upon earth, yea, and the dark regions of hell—then there is reason to apprehend that he has a controversy with us, of which these providences are the tokens and the proofs, and we cannot disregard them without neglecting the best interests of our country, and our duty to God.

Nor would it be difficult to find substantial reasons for the Lord's dealings with us, in our state and conduct as a nation. He has dealt graciously and bountifully with us. There is not a people on earth who are so deeply indebted to the Divine goodness. We have, truly, "a goodly heritage." Whether we look at the extent, fertility, and healthiness of our country, the Divine care in watching over us, the deliverances we have experienced from perils, the rapidity of our growth, in numbers, in wealth, and in the substantial comforts of life, the happy character of our civil institutions, and the exuberance of our religious privileges, we may well say, "he hath not dealt so with any people." What returns have we made to him? Where are the memorials of our gratitude? What improvement have we made of our privileges? As *a nation*, we acknowledge his hand in nothing; we are afraid, as *a people*, even to mention his name. We

have, to be sure, a day of memorial: but whom do we honour by its observance? We sing hosannahs to Mars, by the thunder of our cannon; and pour out libations to Bacchus, in wine or whiskey; but, where are our acknowledgments to the God of our fathers? The sins of the Fourth of July, are more than enough to account for every divine frown we have ever experienced.

The falsehoods, slanders, bribes, blasphemies, perjuries, drunkenness, and broils, connected with almost any general election which takes place in our country, are enough to turn the Divine Mind against us, and tempt the Lord to pour out his wrath upon us.

We have had an unexampled course of prosperity. The earth has brought forth by handfuls; and we have gathered up riches like Solomon. What effect has the Divine goodness had upon us? It has made us greedy of gain, anxious to grow suddenly rich, dissatisfied with the gradually increasing avails of honest industry, proud, extravagant, luxurious, unthankful, and regardless of God, the giver of every good and perfect gift. It appears to me, to be proved to a demonstration, by the very visitations of God's hand, that these are some of our crying, national sins, for which he is now, in a very striking manner, visiting us. Nor is

it strange that it should be so, if he have any mercy left for us; for the love of the world, and the love of God, in which the happiness of intelligent creatures consists, are totally inconsistent with each other. This is a controversy, which he *now* appears to be pleading with us; and, in which it behooves us to "hear the rod," and give God glory, ere he cause darkness.

Nor, finally, would it be difficult to find a pregnant reason for the Divine frowns which have fallen upon us, in the little improvement which we have made of our religious privileges, and in our disregard of those institutions which God has so graciously bestowed upon us. God has said, "Them that honour-eth me, I will honour; and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed." This is a principle of the Divine government. What people have enjoyed the appliances of religion in richer abundance? This is, emphatically, a land of Bibles, Sabbaths, and sanctuaries. We have none to interfere with our duties to God, and the rights of our consciences; and are therefore under the greater obligations to improve our unparalleled privileges. But what are the facts of the case? What multitudes, not only disregard, but despise and abuse every thing which partakes of a religious cha-

racter; and, especially, to what idle and sinful purposes is the day of "sacred rest," "the holy of the Lord, and honourable," the memorial among us of God's creating power and redeeming mercy, perverted? sufficiently so to mark it as a national sin. But, you ask, would you have men obliged by law to read the Bible, sanctify the Sabbath, and wait on the ordinances of religion? Be assured, my hearers, that I have not forgotten the Saviour's declaration, "My kingdom is not of this world." I am not a believer in the absurdity of making men religious by law; or, the worse than folly, of uniting the Church of Jesus Christ to the states of this world. A worse evil could not befall religion. But I do believe, that the obligations of religion, are personal and universal; and that, when men are acquainted with them, and their connected institutions, and disregard and pervert them, that God will hold them responsible, and deal with them accordingly. Nay, that where it amounts to a national sin, that he will visit the nation for it. And while, as a minister of Jesus Christ, I ask not the rulers of the world to establish religion by law, I not only ask, but warn them, to enact no laws, which would go to legalize breaches of God's enactments. Here, I think, we have failed of our duty, and are suffering in consequence of

it. Lightly as men think of the Sabbath, God has connected the honour and glory of his name, and the welfare of his creatures with it, to an extent which eternity only can measure.

You may not be aware of the fact—nevertheless it is true, that the laws of our country oblige many thousands of its inhabitants to live in the habitual breach of the law of the Sabbath, and tempt hundreds of thousands to do so. I allude to the laws which regulate the post-offices, mails, canals, and rail-roads of our country, rendered necessary only by the love of gain, and the desire of gratifying curiosity. But a more painful sight, connected with this part of our subject, has rarely occurred in our country, than was exhibited five weeks ago this day,\* at our National Capitol. On that day, the representatives of the people of these United States, with the Head of the Government in waiting to receive and approve the work of their hands, were assembled in Congress, to complete the work of our annual legislation, which *might* have been finished before in a tenth part of the time

\* Both Houses of Congress were in session during the whole day, on Sabbath, the 3d of March, 1839; and who has rebuked them for it? The secular press has observed a dead silence; and the religious press and the pulpit, if they have spoken at all, have done it in a whisper!!

which had been unprofitably wasted; and the people have made this sin their own, by not rebuking them for it. Over such a scene, angels might weep. Is it a wonder that God frowns upon us?

I have borne my feeble testimony. I have finished the contemplated review of "the signs of the times." On the next occasion, your attention will be directed to "the duty of the Gospel ministry with respect to the signs of the times." And now, to God, only wise, be glory everlasting.

## LECTURE XII.

### DUTY OF THE MINISTRY.

MATTHEW XVI. III.

CAN YE NOT DISCERN THE SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

EZEKIEL III. XVII.

*Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me.*

HAVING completed the contemplated review of "the signs of the times," I think it both relevant and important, to connect the whole subject with the ministry of the Gospel. During his personal ministry on earth, our Saviour was followed by large multitudes, who heard his instructions. There were, however, twelve, who, upon his special call, were more constantly with him, and constituted, as it were, his family. These were denominated his "Apostles," because he occasionally sent them out to



minister in his name; and, when ascending to glory, he commissioned them to “go into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,” appending this promise, “Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world.”

This commission required them to make known the whole will of God to those to whom they should go, in his name, rightly dividing to every man the Word of truth, according to his need, of which, they could judge only as God should teach them, or as their state and character should be developed by Divine Providence. The great body of that instruction, which it is proper and necessary for a minister of the Gospel to give to his hearers, must be drawn from the sacred Scriptures. They are the grand depository of God’s revealed will. This store-house is well replenished. The stock is large, and rich. The Scriptures, however, do not consist of mere doctrines and precepts. They contain, also, the principles of God’s moral government, and the history of its administration, so far as the Church is concerned—and the Church is concerned in it to a greater extent than we are in the habit of imagining. If you will read with attention the seventh and eighth chapters of the book of Daniel, you will find a succinct

prophetical history of the four great kingdoms, which have followed each other in succession, the Babylonish, the Grecian, the Roman, and the politico-religious one which arose out of the last upon the subversion of the Western Roman Empire by the Goths and Vandals. Upon turning your attention to the subject, you will perceive what a mighty influence these have exerted on the Church of God, and the interests of immortal souls. This connexion is still running on; and we are waiting for those farther developments of Divine Providence, which shall bring the great Papal anti-christian apostacy to an end, release the Church of God from her bondage, and bring her out into the liberty and glory of her mil-lennial state. And, because we suppose that the dispensations of Providence, with respect to the nations of the earth, our own country as well as others, have a direct and important bearing on the Church, and the salvation of souls, we are induced to believe that ministers of the Gospel have important duties to discharge, in connexion with "the signs of the times."

I am as far from desiring to make them worldly politicians, as I am from wishing to see them engaged in any of the schemes of ambition or money-making, which are leading

such multitudes to forget God and the salvation of their souls. God forbid, that they should descend from their watch-towers for such purposes. I wish to see them *fixed* on their appropriate posts, awake to their duty, alive to every movement which is taking place, studying the actions of men, and the providence of God, by the light of his Holy Word; with a divine telescope in one hand, and the gospel trumpet in the other, ready to sound an alarm in God's holy mountain, and give the people warning from Him.

Is there one of "the signs of the times," to which your attention has been directed, which has no connexion with the moral character and conduct of men, the state and prospects of the Church of God, the salvation of souls, the welfare of society, and the glory of Jehovah? With respect to some of them, the connexion is direct and palpable. It is so with respect to the subject of missions. Nothing can be more obvious, than that it is the duty of the ministry of reconciliation to give to the Gospel the widest scope, and the greatest efficiency within the sphere of their immediate labours. Their work is not done, and therefore, their hand is not to be stayed, while a sinner remains unconverted, or a saint inconsistent, inactive, or not growing in grace and knowledge. In other words, till all

are doing their duty, and ripening for heaven. The whole body of the Church, however, and, very prominently, the ministers of the Gospel, are firmly and sacredly bound to see, to the fullest extent of their ability, that the Saviour's command, "preach the Gospel to every creature," be carried into effect. The command was manifestly addressed to the Apostles, as the representatives of the whole Church, the radiating point from which light was to go forth to the ends of the earth. Their Master had already said to them, "Ye are the light of the world." Providence has taught us, that it was not the divine design that this command should receive its full accomplishment by the ministry of the Apostles, or in their day; but, that the duty should remain incumbent to the end of time, and hence, is incumbent now; for, such is the import of the appended promise, "Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

There rests, therefore, a weighty duty, and high responsibility on the leaders of the Lord's host, for there remains much land to be possessed. I say, "on the leaders," for it is from them that the body of the Church must receive their intelligence, and learn their duty. It is but little of the state and prospects of our sin-ruined world that the great mass of our con-

gregations either know, or can know, as to its wants and woes, excepting what they learn from the lips of their pastors. Nor can they be brought to act till they are informed, nor will they continue to act, unless the Macedonian cry, "come over, and help us," is constantly sounded in their ears. The feelings and actions of Christians with respect to missions, will take "their form and pressure" from the ministry under which they live. I know not, therefore, why the ministry is not to be held personally responsible for the want of interest or exertion on the part of their congregations, so far as these have been induced by their neglect to communicate to them the necessary intelligence, or to excite them to action by the necessary inducements.

The great lesson here taught is, that the ministry are solemnly bound to make the subject of missions one leading branch of their study, and to bring the knowledge they acquire on it, and the interest they personally feel in it, practically to bear on the people committed to their charge. I allude not merely to the monthly concert of prayer, however important that institution may be—*that* however should command their diligent attention, and their study should be to make it interesting and edifying, for the cause of missions—but, in as

much as comparatively few are in the habit of meeting together on that occasion, it becomes the more necessary to give the subject more frequency and prominence in the stated ministrations of the sanctuary. This would oblige the pastor to study with more attention the state of the world as "without God and without hope," and the duty and agency of the Church with respect to its conversion to God. And the result would be, increased interest and exertion on the part of both, for its consummation. This would produce a happy reaction at home, for it is an undeniable truth, that "the liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth, shall be watered also himself." Is it not to be feared that this subject, so interesting in itself, and so important to the kingdom of Christ in the world, is far from receiving merited attention from the ministry of reconciliation? And if so, is it not high time to wake up to it?

Nor is the cause of education foreign to a minister's duty. I speak not of it now with a reference to the training of a faithful and able ministry, but of education in general. It has appeared from a former discourse, that the subject is acquiring an interest and attention which have never before been bestowed upon it, not only in our own country, but in many

others. It has been spoken of as highly probable, that these will increase, until education shall become general in all lands. It will diffuse itself wherever the Gospel shall go, and many who will refuse the Gospel, will see the necessity of it for themselves. It is also manifest that mental culture will exercise a prodigious influence on the condition and character of our race, in all the relations which they sustain to each other, and to God—and consequently that great and vital changes will be wrought by it upon every part of the world, partaking in their nature of the kind of cultivation which the human mind shall receive. And that from the state of the human heart, as depraved and alienated from God, these will uniformly be adverse to the glory of God and the best interests of man, unless there be a large and early infusion of that knowledge which is able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Without this, the more highly the mere mind of man is educated, the more wise will he be to do evil.

These considerations attach a fearful interest to the subject of education, and should induce Christians, and especially Christian ministers, to study it, with a closeness and interested attention which they have hitherto never bestowed upon it. The following facts are worthy of

serious consideration. The Scriptures are very sparingly used in any of our public schools—from many of them they are totally banished. Multitudes of parents do not make up the deficiency, either by personal attention to the religious education of their children, or by sending them to the Sabbath School, or by bringing them under the Biblical and Catechetical instruction provided for them by the Church. With many parents, in selecting seminaries for the education of their children, the inquiry is never made, what are its religious advantages, or what influence will it be likely to exercise on the salvation of my child, confining their attention to intellectual culture, or the acquisition of mere accomplishments. If these assumptions are well founded, it follows, that multitudes grow up destitute of all that moral and religious training which is vital to usefulness, and comfort on earth, and preparation for heaven. What is the consequence of all this? That multitudes grow up in almost total ignorance of those things which belong to their peace, and many of them with deadly hostility to the claims of the Bible as a divine revelation, because those who have had the direction of their education have not seen fit to have them made acquainted either with the contents or the claims of the Bible. And if the more than



half infidel objection has been made, *they are too young to understand the meaning of the Scriptures*, even a child might reply, you did not proceed thus with respect to other things. You obliged me to study *them*, that I *might* learn to understand them, and you encouraged me by the promise of ultimate success.

There is much here that is wrong, and needs rectification, and it must be rectified, or we shall reap a fearful harvest. And much can be done to abate, if not remove the evil, by the influence and efforts of a faithful ministry. Let them sound an alarm on the subject. Let the truth with respect to it be proclaimed in all the pulpits of our land. Let Christians of every name, at least, be made to learn their duty, and exert their influence on the subject, and a public sentiment would be created which it would not be easy to resist. The professed friends of the Bible are not in the minority in this land, and infidels ask too much of us in a republican country, where the majority must needs govern, when they ask us to banish the Bible from our public schools—and Christians are too complaisant in yielding a point of such high importance upon such insufficient inducements. The more education shall be diffused, the more important will this subject become. I warn my brethren of every denomination of the duty

they owe to God and the world in relation to it, and beseech them, if they can agree in nothing else that they agree to give the Bible the place it should occupy in the school.

My brethren will not contend that it is a matter which does not concern them, that the whole world, as it were, hath run mad after mammon, while the evidence is as clear as the light of the day, that the infection is not only general among those who do not profess the self-denying religion of Christ, but has deeply affected his professed followers; yea, even the ministers of his grace, while the frowns of his providence have caused the hearts of men to quake within them. If this is no business of theirs, why do we read as follows in the holy oracles: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil; which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." "Covetousness, which is idolatry." "Covetousness, let it not be named among you, as it becometh saints." "He that maketh haste to be rich, shall not be innocent." "A rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven." If ever there was a subject which

called upon them to open their eyes and see, and to lift up their voices like trumpets, this is the subject, and this is the time. For let them be assured that while this spirit is thus raging, nothing good or holy, nothing accompanying salvation can be induced. And this is the more incumbent at present, because God is smiting this idol with the right hand of his righteousness. Peradventure they will now hear the voice of his mercy, expostulating with them in the Gospel. And if some of them should be obliged to preach to themselves on the subject, let them not on that account hold their peace, for unless this stumbling-block be removed out of the way, the Gospel will be powerless. Two master passions cannot reign in the human heart at the same time; "ye cannot serve God and mammon," saith Christ. Let Zion's watchmen wake up to this important subject.

Nor should they be blind to the cheap rate at which human life is held in our country. I need not recapitulate what has been said on this painful subject on a former occasion. You know that hundreds of human lives are destroyed every year, and how rarely the law is brought to bear on those who are guilty of it. How shall public sentiment be rectified? Who shall speak for God, and for the souls of men,

which are wantonly sacrificed in hecatombs on the altar of this bloody Moloch? It is a dark sign. Who will observe it? Who will give the people warning from God, before he shall come out of his place to punish us for this sin? God sets too high a value on human life to suffer it to be thus sported with. Let not the ministry of reconciliation say, "this is no concern of ours." Why then has the Lord put into their hands, as his messengers, that volume in which he says, "thou shalt not kill?" "Who-so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed?" And why does he hold to you this language, "give them warning from me?" "If thou give them not warning from me, and they turn not from their iniquity; they shall perish in their iniquity; but their blood will I require at thy hand." The press is silent—and so is the law. And if the pulpit also be silent, who shall sound the alarm? The ministry has a great duty to perform, however unpleasant it may be to *them*, and unwelcome to those who are implicated. They will sin, if they keep silence.

Mention has also been made in these discourses, of the corruption of doctrine in the Christian Church, and of the unhappy effects which have resulted from it, particularly in our own portion of it—the injuries which have re-

sulted from improperly conducted, or spurious revivals of religion—the state of public sentiment and feeling with respect to the great and agitating subject of slavery—the manner in which the spirit of fanaticism has mingled itself up with almost all the important concerns of life—the spirit of lawlessness which has in so threatening a manner broken out in different parts of the land on a variety of occasions—and finally, the frowning aspects of Divine Providence towards our beloved country during the last seven years. These furnish so many points upon which the intelligent and attentive observer of the signs of the times should fix his eye, with the desire of ascertaining, as far as possible, their probable causes, studying them with a reference to their influence on the state of our country with respect to its institutions, its general welfare, its morals, and especially on the influence they will be likely to exert on the Church of God, and the interest of immortal souls—and then to bring to bear upon them the counsel of God, as it may be elaborately gathered from his revealed will.

That they have already produced great effects, no one, who will be at the pains of looking at them with attention, can fail to discover. That they will continue to produce effects equally great, is as certain as that God exer-

cises a moral government over our world. Can it be then, that his watchmen, whom he has placed on the walls, and commanded to give warning from him whenever it shall be necessary, shall neither observe what is taking place, nor speak when events are transpiring, which deeply affect, not only the great temporal interests of men and communities, but the greater interests of God, as connected with the preservation, purity, peace, and efficiency of his Church, the glory of his great name, and the eternal happiness of multitudes?

And which of these "signs" does not implicate these high interests? It surely will not be pretended that they are not involved in the maintainance of purity of doctrine in the Church of God, or the preservation of order in his house. Nor will it be said, that ministers of the Gospel are not bound by the most solemn obligations to teach and defend the truth, and labour by every lawful means in their power to root up and destroy error. If this be not an important part of their business, what is? They are again and again divinely commanded to do so, that they may both save themselves and them that hear them. Nor is this a matter of small moment—for *error eats as doth a canker*. Few things are more injurious to the Church and the world, than the promulgation

of errors in religion, especially on vital subjects. This induced Paul to withstand Peter to his face at Galatia.

Nor need it be proved, on the one hand, that revivals of religion, pure and undefiled, are of the last importance, with respect to the declarative glory of God, the enlargement and efficiency of the Church, and the salvation of our sin-ruined world; or, on the other hand, that ministers of the Gospel have a very high concern in them. These things are as evident as the light of the sun at noon-day. Let it, however be borne in mind, that the character and results of revivals are materially affected by the means employed in conducting them. It is true, that no genuine revival of religion can exist, or be carried on, without the quickening, illuminating, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. What Paul said to the Corinthians, is true of this subject: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." Neither those who are asleep, nor those who are "dead in trespasses and sins," obey any other voice. Still, they are very much modified by the means employed in conducting them, and the circumstances attending them. Their character will, for instance, be very different, if they are conducted under a full exhibition of Gospel truth, connected with deep

conviction of sin, and humble dependence on the Spirit and grace of God; than if they should be induced under instruction in which the distinguishing features of the Gospel should be kept out of view, especially if they should be connected with any considerable degree of human machinery, and excitement of the imagination or the feelings. This distinction, and it is an important one, brings the subject fairly within the line of ministerial duty, and makes it incumbent on all the ministers of the Gospel to study the nature of revivals of religion, to watch their progress with sedulous care, and to give a right direction to all those influences and exercises which are connected with them. For let them be assured, that much will, under God, depend upon them. They have a deep interest in the whole subject. They should be the fast friends, and active promoters of revivals. But let them see to it, that they present no strange fire before the Lord, nor sow tares in his field. Let not the lesson, so painfully taught during late years, be lost upon them. Much remains to be accomplished before the world shall be brought into subjection to the cross of Christ; and it is to be effected by means of revivals, more pure, extensive, and glorious than have ever yet been experienced. This is known to the powers of



darkness; and if they can palsy this arm of strength, they will do it. If in any thing the ministry should "be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves," this is the very thing. They must be firm, wise, zealous.

You will remember, that the existence of slavery in our country, and the state of public sentiment with respect to it, has been considered as one of the "signs of the times," bearing, with no small weight, on the public interest, and the prospects of religion among us. This exciting subject can scarcely fail to attract the attention of the ministry of reconciliation, and lead to serious thoughts as to their own duty with respect to it. They will do well to remember the various relations in which it stands. They must look at it, as connected with the Constitution and laws of our land—as it bears on the rights and duties of all concerned: and especially, as it involves the state and prospects of immortal souls. They must look at it in its various bearings. They must ponder deeply their own situation as men, as American citizens, as Christians, and as ministers of the Gospel. I dare not say, that they have nothing to do with the subject, in either of these relations; but I do say, that they will find, in every view which they can take of it, much to perplex and embarrass

them. They will find it difficult to determine the line of duty, if it involve action. They cannot, however, be mistaken in governing their own spirits, and keeping themselves aloof from any course of action which may jeopard the peace of the country, the safety of our institutions, the welfare of the African race, and the unity and edification of the Church. Especially should it be their duty and prayer, to know how they may bring the Gospel to bear upon them, so that they may endure their lot, in the enjoyment of the comforts of religion, and the hope of heaven, until God, in his inscrutable wisdom, shall throw light on this dark subject, and make the line of duty plain before our face. That day will come. In the mean time, great care is necessary, lest we cast abroad "firebrands, arrows, and death." In relation to this subject the saying is true, "Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth." Even a slight movement of one imprudent minister, may prove to be as the breaking forth of an overwhelming flood.

"The spirit of fanaticism," is another of those subjects, at which a minister of the Gospel should look with close attention. We have, on a former occasion, adverted to its prevalence and evil effects in our own age and country. It has been shown, to have effected

almost every department of business; the cause of temperance; the civil and political institutions of our country; the subjects of slavery, and peace; the benevolent institutions of the day; and finally, the doctrines, order, and action of the Church of God, particularly with respect to revivals of religion, and this, if nothing else, brings it fairly and legitimately within the range of ministerial care, watchfulness, and animadversion. The country and the Church have both felt its deleterious influence. It has made a part of our own allotment in the Lord's vineyard, like a forest through which a raging fire has passed; and, if its progress has been arrested, it is still far from being extinguished. It is so much "the spirit of the age," that it may be expected to break out again, as often as any one of a hundred breezes may blow upon it. The mischiefs it has wrought, is a sufficient reason to keep it under watchful supervision. Every part of the Church has in it some of these combustible spirits, who are ready, at every moment, to burst out. Ordinary duties and seasons will not move them to action. They move not but in the tempest. They act not but by explosion. The importance of the subject will warrant the admonition. Watch against it. Repress it in your own bosom—in all over whom

you can exercise an influence, especially in the Church. It is a spirit of ignorance; and one of the best safeguards against it, is to fill the mind with sound knowledge and understanding, in the fear of the Lord. It thinks not, it reflects not; it is empty, and therefore is carried about by every wind which strikes it. Guard against it, in every thing, and you will be sure to preserve the Church from its destructive influence.

It will be remembered, that, on a former occasion, the age in which we live was spoken of as having, for one of its "signs" and distinguishing characteristics, "a spirit of lawlessness," which is restless, uneasy, and discontented; which refuses to be in subjection to any rule or authority, claiming to make its own will its almost only rule of action, while the will itself is governed by the passions of an unsanctified heart. This spirit was shown to have manifested itself in the bearing and use of deadly weapons by private individuals, in the ordinary affairs of life, either, as is alleged, for self-defence, or, for the assertion of their personal rights, or the redress of their personal wrongs, as though there were no shield of law to cover every head, and protect every right—in the practice of duelling—and in the prevalence of mobs. Now, I contend,

that this state of things is fairly subject to the animadversions of the pulpit, as well because it involves the interests of religion, the glory of God, and the welfare of society, as because it is a violation of the precepts of God's law, and the positive injunction which says: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; the powers that be, are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation." "Put them in mind," (says Paul to Titus,) "to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates." Says Peter, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake; whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him, for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God." The duty of ministers, in this respect, cannot be questioned. They owe it as a sacred duty to God, as well as to the community in which they dwell, not only to obey the law for conscience sake, but to uphold the law, and maintain the peace and order of society, to teach men their duty in this respect, and to rebuke the spirit of lawlessness with all the authority with which God has

clothed them. And I apprehend, that they have need of being stirred up to the discharge of this duty. I fear, the ministry has often been well nigh silent, when it should have spoken out in the name of the Lord. If the twelve or fifteen thousand pulpits of our land should have sounded the alarm, much of the disorder and confusion which has disgraced our country, and injured the cause of free institutions throughout the world, might have been prevented.

In my last discourse on “the signs of the times,” occasion was taken to speak, somewhat at large, of the dealings of God towards our country, during the last seven years—particularly with reference to adverse providences, which might have been designed, if not to punish, yet to rebuke and chasten us, for our national sins. Mention was made of that awful scourge, the cholera, in 1832—the number of lives lost by shipwrecks on the ocean, and the multitude of disasters which have occurred on the waters of our country, in conducting navigation by steam power—the pecuniary losses which have been suffered from the derangements of business, shipwrecks, steam-boat disasters, and the extensive conflagrations which have occurred in several of our cities—the failure of crops—Indian wars—and the danger

which has existed of becoming embroiled with other nations. These things were considered as indications of the Divine displeasure against us for our national sins, in failure of suitable gratitude for the Lord's goodness to us as a nation, for the small improvement which we have made of our privileges, and our inordinate desire and eager pursuit of wealth, connected with the almost necessary consequences, worldly mindedness, luxury, and forgetfulness of God. These are all signs, hung out by God, to be observed, studied, and improved by men—divine instruction taught to be learned—a father's rod chastising his children—"elder Scripture, writ by God's own hand," teaching lessons of practical wisdom. And if in such things he says to all, "can ye not discern the signs of the times," what does he say to the watchmen whom he hath set on the walls of Zion for the very purpose of observing them.

The very object of their appointment is, to study his word, and observe his movements towards the children of men, and when they understand them, to give their fellow creatures warning from God, with all faithfulness, assiduity, and affection, so that they may learn their danger, and betake themselves to their hiding place for safety. This is one of the peculiar duties of the sacred ministry, which they can-

not neglect without sin. In the smaller sphere they act upon the principle. If some disastrous providence occur in the congregation to which they minister, or the village or city where they dwell, they speak out—they lift up the voice like a trumpet. Now, why is it that they have no concern with those providences which manifestly relate to the state and welfare of a nation? The difference, if there be any, is this;—the greater the number to be affected by the dispensation, the deeper should be their solicitude, and the more earnest their warning. My apprehension is, that the ministry has to a considerable extent mistaken its duty in relation to this subject. Their observations are not sufficiently extensive, or they suppose those to whom they minister to have no concern in the broader lines of providence, or they feel afraid of becoming implicated in matters which do not belong to their office. But what is there in the word of God, or in the dealings of his hand, from which they may not derive instruction which may be useful in the prosecution of their ministry? It is admitted, that care, prudence, and often, nice discernment, are necessary to conduct this part of their ministry to edification. But surely it can furnish no excuse for neglecting it!

It appears, then, from the views to which



your attention has this evening been directed, that the ministry of reconciliation has an important concern in observing, studying with assiduity, care, and prayerfulness, and applying with affectionate solicitude and faithfulness, "the signs of the times," for the temporal benefit and the spiritual edification of those who hear them. It was under a distinct impression of the truth and importance of this conclusion, that the course of instruction on "the signs of the times," which has for so long a time engaged your attention, was commenced, has been prosecuted, and is this evening brought to a close. It has been attended on my part with some considerable labour, some portion of satisfaction, not unmingled with anxiety, and not without affectionate solicitude and prayerful desire, that it might, through the Divine blessing, be made, in some humble measure, useful to the souls of those who have heard it, to the interests of our beloved country, and to the cause of Christ. And, if the Lord shall grant the request, may it be to the honour of his great name, and glorious grace. *Amen.*

THE END.











Oct-10-11

[REDACTED]